



CLASSIC HOME VIDEO GAMES

1985-1988

A Complete Reference Guide

Brett Weiss

Foreword by BILL KUNKEL

Classic Home Video Games,
1985–1988

ALSO BY BRETT WEISS

Classic Home Video Games, 1972–1984:
A Complete Reference Guide (McFarland, 2007)

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To Mike, Kelly, Chris, and Cara Davis,
whose love and support through the years
have had an immeasurable impact on my life

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FOREWORD

by Bill Kunkel

More than any other companies in the history of electronic gaming, Nintendo, Sega, and later Sony established video games as a lifestyle, a hobby that would endure beyond the “video game craze” of the ’70s. Following the Great Implosion of ’83, as the Age of Atari crumbled, game console and software sales tanked and American industry and retail alike closed the coffin lid on the video game as a viable entertainment format and shoveled on the dirt.

In their heart of hearts, after all, most American retailers and even many executives within the industry itself had always viewed the video game boom as a fad. Throughout the entire mid-’80s, the only place most Americans played electronic games was on computers or at the arcades. And the only games the computers offered were coin-op derivatives or text (and later illustrated and even animated) RPGs and adventure games. For most Americans, video games were now perceived as the carrot-on-the-stick gateway to the computer-in-every-household world that many people thought would take place 20 years before it actually occurred.

But the Japanese never lost faith. Japanese coin-op manufacturers had, in many ways, helped create the second generation American video game boom (i.e., the Age of Atari) with games like *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man* and they saw no diminution of interest among Japanese gamers.

Simultaneously, a phrase was beginning to permeate the world of seven-disk computer games, intolerable delays in loading new content, the incredible range of power among even the same company’s microcomputers as well as a labyrinth of audio and video augmentation boards that made system/software compatibility an issue in every purchase (“I can buy this really cool-looking game, but it’s going to play like crap on my computer. If it plays at all.”). Then there was the question of whether software publishers should be making “games” at all, when they could concentrate their efforts on the more academic-sounding “simulations.”

And all of it took that phrase from a murmur to a command. That phrase was plug ’n’ play.

The old joys of ripping a plastic-encased game board directly out of the box, putting it into your game system and seeing it on the TV suddenly acquired a nostalgic appeal. Moreover, computer gaming was, and remains, a socially isolated experience. Online play has long allowed computer gamers to test their skills against gamers in remote locations, but the key word there was “remote.” People began to remember how much fun it had been to play against their brother, sister, parents, and friends head-to-head in the most comfortable room in the house on a TV screen that was almost certainly larger than your computer monitor.

All of these things converged when Nintendo brought its Nintendo Entertainment System (complete with a dorky robot that was eliminated from the system with appropriate swiftness) and Sega introduced its Sega Master System to America. Video games were once again embraced as part of a lifestyle, as fixed a member of the pop cultural pantheon as pop music, movies, and comic books. There will be good years and bad years, we realized, but the idea of the video game itself as a staple of popular entertainment was here to stay.

The Nintendo/Sega (and later Sony) era revolutionized the concept of what you could do with video games. Elaborate, action-driven adventures joined the video game landscape and the platform and scrolling shooter genres became the dominant categories. After all, the Nintendo/Sega era redefined the nature of gaming by transitioning gamers from a joystick-driven, one or two action button para-

digm to the “joypad,” an interface that all but demanded an endless diet of platformers. For the first time, the idea of multiple action buttons (direction was now controlled with the left hand via the directional joypad) and the timing required in pushing them became the driving force behind most games of this period. Movement was largely confined to North-East-South-West commands and the trick was in perfectly timing a jump over a ravine or onto a mushroom.

The Nintendo/Sega (and later Sony) era taught us to once again love video games and, to this day, Nintendo and Sony remain the world’s most successful producers of video game hardware. So take a stroll back through the mid and late ’80s, when a new voice and a new culture took back the right to enjoy video games.

Take it away, Brett...

Bill Kunkel (AKA The Game Doctor) and his partner Arnie Katz “invented” video game journalism in Video magazine in 1978 and then, with Katz and Joyce Worley, created Electronic Games in 1981. Kunkel has designed games, consulted, written numerous game strategy books, and served as an expert witness in much of the industry’s seminal litigation. His memoirs, Confessions of the Game Doctor, were published in 2006, and he’s a regular columnist at J2Games.com.

PREFACE

The year 1984 was a bad one for the U.S. home video game industry. No new consoles were released in 1984 (or in 1983, for that matter), and the Atari 5200 and ColecoVision, which had seemed so fresh and innovative in 1982, were (or already had been) abandoned by their manufacturers, not to mention most of their owners. The ubiquitous Atari 2600 was still being produced, but it was increasingly obvious that the antiquated system was a primitive relic of another time. Atari was losing money by the bucketful, prompting Warner Communications to sell the company. INTV rescued the aging Intellivision from oblivion in 1984, keeping it afloat until 1991, but sales of INTV games barely registered a blip on the consumer radar. What had once been a thriving industry, boasting gross sales of \$3.2 billion in 1982, was on the verge of extinction.

As fate would have it, a Japanese outfit called Nintendo (which began in 1889 as a playing card manufacturer) was more than eager to save the proverbial day. In 1985, the company test-marketed their Nintendo Entertainment System (called the Famicom in Japan) in select locations in New York City and released it nationwide in early 1986, giving birth to the next generation of home video game consoles. Bolstered by the legendary launch title *Super Mario Bros.*, which fascinated consumers with its expansive gameplay, delightful audio/visuals, and plethora of secrets and surprises, the Nintendo NES captured the collec-

tive consciousness of a nation and quickly supplanted the Atari 2600 as the system that the general public most frequently associated with video games. Nintendo put the U.S. home video game market back on the map, and the industry has been going strong ever since (despite such intermittent misfires as the Panasonic 3DO and the Philips CD-i).

I got my very own NES, along with its killer app (*Super Mario Bros.*, of course), in August of 1987 as a birthday present from my older brother. Before the year was up, I added such quality titles as *Castlevania*, *Contra*, *Ikari Warriors*, *Ghosts 'n Goblins*, *Double Dribble*, and *The Legend of Zelda* to my NES library. I was thrilled with the NES, but still kept my favorite system — the ColecoVision — hooked up to my 19-inch television set, which sat on a desk in my bedroom. Despite the advances made by Nintendo, I still enjoyed the simple pleasures of munching dots, climbing ladders, and shooting descending armadas of alien invaders that the ColecoVision, Atari 2600, and other older systems offered. (The NES was home to a number of retro arcade ports, such as *BurgerTime*, *Galaga*, and *Ms. Pac-Man*, but the emphasis was definitely on the newer, more elaborate games.)

As biased toward the ColecoVision (and other outdated systems) as I was, I had to admit that the NES games were vastly superior in many ways, especially in terms of graphics, controls (the NES D-pad was a huge improve-

ment over previous joysticks and control discs), and the epic nature of the games. Playing such adventure titles as *Metroid* and *The Legend of Zelda* was a liberating experience when compared to the relatively confining nature of most games for previous consoles. I found myself powering up Nintendo's gray box with increasing frequency, spending hours upon hours hopping on monsters, jumping across treacherous chasms, beating up bad guys, battling bosses, completing objective-specific levels, playing relatively realistic basketball and hockey, and undertaking comparatively complex missions, many of which revolved around rescuing the proverbial damsel in distress (usually a princess).

The NES revitalized my interest in home video games in general, spurring me to purchase the inevitable consoles that followed, such as the Sega Master System (1986), the Sega Genesis (1989), and the Super Nintendo (1991). Games like *Shinobi* (Master System), *Sonic the Hedgehog* (Genesis), and *Super Mario World* (Super NES) offered new worlds to explore, new challenges to conquer, and new shelves to build (for my increasingly large library of games).

Unlike many gamers, simply buying a new game, playing it to death, and then getting rid of it wasn't enough for me. I wanted to keep each cartridge (along with its accompanying box and manual), especially the games that I thoroughly enjoyed. To me, building a good library of video games is akin to having a nice collection of books or movies. You never know when the urge might hit to revisit (or share with a friend) an old favorite, be it Orwell's 1984, Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, or Shigeru Miyamoto's *Super Mario Bros.* (The fact that Miyamoto is not a household name underscores the relative infancy of and the lack of respect accorded to the video game industry when compared to books and movies.)

Over the years, I have amassed countless video game cartridges and more than 40 game consoles, and I've always wanted to do something with that collection beyond simply playing the games. I enjoy reading about video games, but there aren't a whole lot of books on

the subject (compared to various other commercially viable pop culture art forms), especially in terms of literate, comprehensive, thoroughly researched reference guides. To help fill that gap, I wrote a book called *Classic Home Video Games, 1972–1984: A Complete Reference Guide* (McFarland, 2007), which chronicled every video game console released during that time, plus all the cartridges for those systems, regardless of the release dates of those cartridges. That book covered what I (and certain other historians) call the golden age of home video games, which includes such consoles as the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and ColecoVision.

The book you hold in your hands picks up where the first volume left off. *Classic Home Video Games, 1985–1988* covers the three systems released during that prolific era, plus all the games produced for those systems regardless of the release date. Included is every U.S.-released game for the Nintendo NES, the Sega Master System, and the Atari 7800. Those of you who read the first volume of *Classic Home Video Games* know I included the 7800 in that book (since it was a throwback to earlier systems, and since it completed the “trilogy” of classic Atari consoles), but I have updated it for the present work, expanding most of the entries and adding newly relevant information, such as comparisons to similar NES and Master System titles.

As with the first volume, this book is designed to be a video game version of a classic American movie guide, directing readers to the games they may enjoy. Each entry describes the gameplay in detail and includes pertinent data for that title, and most entries contain critical analysis. The review elements reflect my opinions, of course, but I tried to remain as objective as possible when considering the merits (or lack thereof) of each game. When possible (and when relevant), I compared the games to their arcade, computer, and other-console counterparts.

In addition to exhaustive entries for each game, the book includes a foreword by the legendary Bill “The Game Doctor” Kunkel, who co-founded *Electronic Games Magazine*, which basically invented the concept of video game

journalism, along with many of its medium-specific terms and phrases. As a teenager, I read each and every issue of *Electronic Games* from cover to cover, marveling over the publication's high-gloss photos, colorful screen shots, and entertaining, informative articles. If someone would have told me when I was 15 that someday Bill Kunkel would be writing the introduction to a book I had written, you could have knocked me over with a cathode ray.

In preparing *Classic Home Video Games, 1985–1988*, I played (and replayed) hundreds of games, usually at night. And the next morning (oftentimes as early as three), fueled by a strong, hot cup of Earl Grey (which I started drinking and quickly became addicted to after watching Captain Picard order it time and again from the food replicator on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*), I would write about the games I had played the night before. I researched each title extensively, using a variety of resources, most notably my own collection. Since most game cartridges for older systems found “in the wild” and even at game stores lack instruction manuals (despite the already extensive nature of my collection, I had to purchase and borrow lots of games during the writing of the book), I consulted websites (primarily Atari Age and Nintendo Age) that contain scans of said manuals. In addition, certain websites offer game downloads, which were especially helpful when it came to cartridges that I couldn't get my hands on.

Skeptical modernists may wonder why in the world someone would want to play (or read about, for that matter) games from the increasingly ancient 1980s (and early '90s), when today's consoles, such as the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, and Nintendo Wii, offer vastly superior graphics and sounds. There's the nostalgia factor, of course, but one of the most important reasons lies in dimensions. With the exception of certain handheld titles (such as *New Super Mario Bros.*), puzzlers (such as the countless *Tetris* iterations), and download-only games (such as the decidedly retro *Mega Man 9*), two-dimensional gaming has largely become a lost art, alienating many of us who grew up in a 2D virtual world. Entire genres, such as the side-scrolling shooter and the side-scrolling plat-

former, have all but disappeared, prompting fans of those types of games to look to consoles of the past.

Many modern titles benefit tremendously from 3D graphics (playing *Halo* or *Resident Evil* in 2D would be unthinkable, for example), but old-school 2D games are generally more demanding, especially in terms of timing and precision of movement. Players are forced to make difficult jumps (or other maneuvers) and face hordes of hard-to-avoid enemies with alarming frequency. One-hit deaths are commonplace, and it is often necessary to battle the same boss or retry the same level many, many times before figuring out the correct pattern or developing the proper skill set required to defeat that boss or level.

In short, older games are frequently more challenging and more intense than newer ones, at least in terms of quick reflexes and pure eye-hand coordination. Certain modern titles are terribly difficult (*Ninja Gaiden* for the Xbox, anyone?), but they are the exception to the rule. Classic games are generally more simplistic in design as well, meaning there are fewer button combinations to hassle with and fewer hoops to jump through in learning how to play the games. Another appeal of classic gaming is the assortment of titles that reflect the zeitgeist and are likely to never be remade or ported to a current console, such as *Michael Jackson's Moonwalker*, *Pete Rose Baseball*, and *Bill & Ted's Excellent Video Game Adventure*. More important, many of the older games are still a heck of a lot of fun.

Thanks to eBay auctions, video game conventions (such as the Classic Gaming Expo and the Oklahoma Video Game Exhibition), and console emulators (such as the Nintendo Wii's Virtual Console, which lets players download games for the NES, Master System, and other antiquated systems), gamers of all ages are hopping aboard the classic video game bandwagon with increasing frequency, discovering the thrills and inevitable spills two-dimensional gaming has to offer. In addition, countless classic systems are still hooked up to television sets across the country, letting veteran gamers hang on to an important part of their youths. Instead of simply remembering the “good old days,”

video gamers have the advantage of reliving them again and again.

Classic Home Video Games, 1985–1988: A Complete Reference Guide pays tribute to those classic games by cataloging and describing each

and every one of them in detail, mainstream hits and obscure oddities alike. Hopefully, the book makes for entertaining reading as well, for both casual fans and hardcore gamers.

ATARI 7800

The Atari 7800 ProSystem was a solid upgrade over the 2600 and the 5200, both of which were great consoles, but had a number of increasingly obvious shortcomings. By 1986, when the 7800 hit store shelves, the 2600 was drastically outdated (blocky graphics just wouldn't cut it anymore), and the aging 5200, which had fragile, non-centering joysticks that were the subject of much derision, had ceased production in 1984. When the 7800 hit the scene, gaming traditionalists were thrilled with the system's trio of launch titles, which included *Joust*, *Ms. Pac-Man*, and *Asteroids*, the latter of which offered a new wrinkle on the old rock-shooting formula: two-player simultaneous action. *Pole Position II*, a less impressive port, was the pack-in game with the system.

Unfortunately for Atari apologists, the wildly popular Nintendo NES had launched in the U.S. the year before, ushering in the next generation of home gaming. The dynastic NES boasted the vaunted *Super Mario Bros.*, one of the best, most influential games in the history of the industry, and the console would soon become the home of such groundbreaking titles as *Metroid* and *The Legend of Zelda*. The 7800, though blessed with nice retro arcade ports and a number of other interesting titles (such as *Midnight Mutants*), simply couldn't compete with the Nintendo juggernaut. The NES saw vastly superior marketing and third-party support, and its cartridge library contained a plethora of games that were expansive in na-

ture and advanced in terms of both gameplay and graphics. The 7800 also had to compete with Sega's Master System.

Theoretically, the Atari 7800 could have launched in 1984, since it had been designed and tested by that time. However, former Commodore executive Jack Tramiel had bought the video game and computer divisions of Atari from Warner Bros. in 1984, and, for a variety of reasons, shelved the 7800 until 1986, after the NES had already staked an enormous claim on the market. It's been reported that Tramiel preferred computers over consoles, that he was skeptical until he saw the money Nintendo was bringing in, and that he had some licensing issues to work out. Whatever the case, the 7800 made it into stores a couple of years too late. In addition, the system was hindered by Atari's continued support of the 2600, and by the confusing introduction of the Atari XE console, which played cartridges designed for Atari's line of home computers.

The Atari 7800 is a powerful, graphically capable system that can handle lots of moving objects at once with little to no slowdown or flickering. Also, it is backwards-compatible with the Atari 2600, meaning it can play most of the games in the 2600 library. On a less positive note, its sound capabilities are comparable to 2600 audio, and many gamers complain about the system's controllers, which are sturdy (compared to Atari 5200 joysticks), but tiring on the hands. The side buttons are thumb-



Atari 7800 console with two joystick controllers. Though home to some nice ports of classic arcade games, such as *Asteroids* and *Centipede*, the 7800 couldn't compete with the NES, which boasted such cutting edge titles as *Super Mario Bros.* and *The Legend of Zelda*.

killers when lots of continual pressing is required. The system is compatible with any Atari 2600 joystick, but only for one-button games.

Production of the Atari 7800 came to a halt in 1991, and the system left with the reputation of an underachiever. Given an earlier release date, more marketing support, and more console-defining games, the 7800 could have challenged Nintendo on a more even playfield. Unfortunately, that just wasn't meant to be.

Atari 7800 Games

Ace of Aces

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1988.

This first-person game puts players in the World War II-era Royal Air Force, piloting a RAF Mosquito through the not-so-friendly skies, shooting or bombing U-boats, JU88

bombers, ME 109 fighters, and V1 rockets. Players view the action through five different screens, including from directly below the plane. The relatively complicated gameplay includes: loading up the plane with missiles, bullets, and fuel canisters; operating a variety of plane controls (thrust, engine speed, altitude, flaps, boost, and the like); putting out engine fires; navigating through or around storms; consulting intelligence reports; and more. The cockpit controls look great, and there are plenty of things to do for the patient gamer. The controls are sluggish (the computer versions of the game benefit from keyboard control), and the action moves slowly, but *Ace of Aces* is superior to *Tomcat F-14*, *F-18 Hornet*, and *Super Huey* (similar games for the 7800).

Alien Brigade

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Although *Alien Brigade* is light gun compatible, it can also be played using a standard

Atari 7800 controller. Players point the gun at (or guide a cursor around) the screen, shooting such targets as aliens, brainwashed soldiers, helicopters, tanks, and spaceships while trying not to harm mermaids, panthers, civilians, and other innocents. Gamers begin with a single-shot, semi-automatic pistol, a five-burst automatic machine gun, 100 48-round clips of ammunition, and eight grenades. However, each scenario offers more weapons (some of which are hidden), including rockets, a flamethrower, a laser rifle, and a dart gun. Levels to blast through include: Deep Jungle Camp, South American River Resort, Underwater, Alien Cave Base, and Main Alien Cave Base. There are lots of things to shoot, but the action sometimes experiences slowdown when the screen gets too busy. The rapid-fire gameplay is fast-paced, and the detailed graphics feature some nice animations, such as aliens dissolving after being shot. *Alien Brigade* is the sequel to *Planet Smashers*.

Asteroids

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Asteroids for the Atari 7800 is a brilliant port/upgrade of Atari's 1979 arcade smash. The game controls about like the 2600 version (push joystick left and right to rotate ship, push forward to thrust), but includes a number of features that make it stand out, such as textured, colorful, spinning asteroids that evoke the space rocks found in *Blasteroids* (arcade, 1987). More importantly, the game has a couple of awesome two-player modes: Competition Asteroids and Team Asteroids, the latter of which lets friendly fire pass harmlessly through the players' ships. Arcade purists may scoff at the raster visuals (the coin-op classic had black-and-white vector graphics) and the joystick controls (the original benefited from a five-button layout), but open minded shooter buffs will absolutely love this game. *Asteroids* for the 7800 lacks the *Asteroids Deluxe*-like shields feature found in the Atari 2600 version, but the two-player action more than makes up for this relatively minor absence. *Asteroids* was also ported

to the Game Boy and Game Boy Color. Followed by two enhanced remakes: *Asteroids* (PlayStation) and *Asteroids Hyper 64* (Nintendo 64).

Ballblazer

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Sports/Futuristic, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Ballblazer for the Atari 7800 improves upon the 5200 version by providing sharper graphics (the ships and ball have smoother edges) and better controls. For the uninitiated, the game is essentially futuristic, one-on-one soccer, but with hovercrafts (called Rotofoils) instead of players and moving goalbeams instead of standard goals. The first-person, pseudo-3D action is set in 3097 on the luminous surface of an artificial asteroid, which is a green, 1155-square grid surrounded by an electroboundary. The split-screen perspective (featuring a panoramic viewpoint), dazzling sounds, and excellent two-player action have truly stood the test of time. Followed by: *Ballblazer Champions* (PlayStation).

Barnyard Blaster

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

This mediocre light gun shooter has nice graphics and a fun setting, but little else going for it. Players take aim and fire at bottles, cans, gophers, watermelons, pumpkins, rabbits, ducks, chickens, owls, and other targets across four levels of play: The Barnyard, The Cornfield, The Barn, and Gramps' Bonus Screen, the latter of which features an old man redundantly throwing bottles into the air. Some gamers may get a mischievous kick out of shooting Gramps himself. Moving targets, which appear onscreen just one at a time, only travel in straight lines and are easy to hit, making *Barnyard Blaster* a rather dull shooter. One thing that does help is that smaller, faster targets are worth more points. Also, hitting targets quickly scores more points. At the end of the game, players are ranked (with names like Total Dud, Red Neck, Sniper, and Terminator) according to how many screens they completed.

BasketBrawl

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

This rowdy game of two-on-two basketball lets players shoot hoops and fight on three different courts: Street, Junkyard, and Rooftop, each of which features the typical elevated side-view perspective. The referee, Scott “The Blade” Savage, is outfitted with a knife (that he throws at players) instead of a whistle, emphasizing the no-rules gameplay. Players can punch and even throw the ball at one another, and this irreverent take on the sport is as fun as it sounds. There are six different players from which to choose and three power-ups to grab for enhanced strength, speed, and power. Gamers can team up against the computer or play competitively. Injured players are not replaced, forcing some highly entertaining two-on-one situations. The working title for *BasketBrawl* was “Hoop Wars.” Also released for the Atari Lynx.

Centipede

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1987.

Now *this* is the way to adapt a coin-op classic to a home system. Like the oft-ported arcade game (Atari, 1980), *Centipede* for the 7800 provides fun-filled shooting action for gamers of all persuasions (*Centipede* was one of the only shooters of the era with a large female following). The mushroom field looks great (despite being surrounded by an unnecessary border), the controls are smooth (despite the lack of trackball control), and all the original creatures and other elements are in place (nitpickers will notice that the spider has just four legs). Plus, 7800 fans are treated to a system-exclusive two-player simultaneous mode, which lets gamers cooperate or compete. The cooperative mode displays individual scores, plus a cumulative total that gives players a real sense of teamwork. The competitive mode, in which players shoot at each other (in addition to the creatures and mushrooms), adds a whole new strategy to the formula. *Mil-*

liped, which was the sequel to *Centipede*, was ported to the NES and Atari 2600, but not the 7800. *Centipede* spawned an enhanced remake for the PlayStation and Dreamcast.

Choplifter!

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Ibid. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Unlike the Atari 5200 version of *Choplifter!*, which was a port of Dan Gorlin’s Apple II computer game (1982), the 7800 rendition appears to be a translation of Sega’s 1985 arcade classic. Unfortunately, it is missing the surface-to-air missiles of the coin-op game (something the superior Master System version retains), as well as the fuel factor and digitized voice effects. Worse, the game simply ends after 64 POWs have been rescued or killed. Despite these insufficiencies (and despite Atari 2600–like graphics and sounds), the game remains enjoyable to some degree, thanks largely to Gorlin’s original formula, which has players piloting a chopper back and forth across the screen, firing a machine gun at and dropping bombs on tanks, jet fighters, and drone air mines, making sure to rescue and transport the aforementioned POWs whenever they appear along the ground. Followed by: *Choplifter II* (Game Boy) and *Choplifter III* (Game Boy, Game Gear, SNES).

Commando

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

A fine port of the Data East arcade game (1985), *Commando* for the 7800 has players guiding a Rambo-like character through hostile territory, shooting bullets and firing grenades at enemies and their jeeps, dynamite trucks, motorcycles, and pillboxes. There are POWs to rescue as well. The screen is frequently busy with enemies and obstacles (trees, rivers, ponds, bunkers, and the like), so the action stays hot and heavy most of the time. Thanks to the inefficiently designed 7800 controller, this can cause the player’s hands to get tired and cramped, but the fun gameplay is worth the fatigue. The graphics have taken a

slight hit, and the characters are smaller than their coin-op counterparts, but these small gripes (so to speak) shouldn't keep anyone away from playing this great game. Four difficulty levels are included. Fans of *Front Line* and *Ikari Warriors* will feel right at home with *Commando*. Also released for the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and NES.

Crack'ed

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. First-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Crack'ed is a potentially interesting game with a fatal flaw. Players guide a cursor around the screen, firing a slingshot at bluebirds, owls, fish, ghosts, snakes, aliens, and other creatures that are raiding the nests of rare South American hornbills. If a creature does pick up an egg, that creature can be shot, and the egg can be caught and carried back to the nest. There are five nesting sites: Tree, Sewer, Sea, Dungeon, and Moon. There are also Rooster Ranch stages, in which players throw eggs at roosters that pop up from behind nests. The game sports a fun concept and nice visuals (the variety of creatures and settings is especially impressive), but it lacks light gun support. As a result, the cursor moves jerkily around the screen, making it hard to aim. When compared to the Atari 2600 version (which was released by CGE Services at the 2002 Classic Gaming Expo), *Crack'ed* for the Atari 7800 has more levels (six instead of two) and more types of enemies (15 instead of six).

Crossbow

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

One of the most impressive arcade ports in the Atari 7800 library, *Crossbow* is based on the 1983 Exidy coin-op semi-classic, which is imbued with a faux crossbow controller for taking aim at the ghosts, witches, frogs, dragons, alligators, slime monsters, archers, pterodactyls, and other enemies. The 7800 version uses light gun support to nice effect and includes eight colorful, richly detailed levels: Desert, Caverns, Volcano, Jungle, Village, River, Drawbridge, and Castle Hall (Village

and Castle Hall are missing from the Atari 2600 version, which is not light gun compatible). Plus, there's a confrontation with the dreaded Evil Master. The objective is to keep a group of friends safe as they walk (from left to right) through the aforementioned areas by basically acting as a sniper. Naturally, the high resolution graphics found in the arcade game have been toned down a bit (the color palette is smaller, for example), but the visuals still look fantastic.

Dark Chambers

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Maze Shooter/Adventure, 1 or 2 Players (simultaneous). 1988.

A slower, less enjoyable take on the formula established by the arcade classic *Gauntlet* (Atari, 1985), *Dark Chambers* has players exploring 26 scrolling, maze-like dungeons, gathering treasure while using guns, daggers, and bombs to destroy surprisingly non-aggressive wraiths, skeletons, wizards, grim reapers, and spawners, the latter of which hatch new ghouls. Traps and poisons should be avoided, but potions (for increasing strength), keys (for entering secret rooms), hearts (which can revive the player's dead partner), and shields should be picked up as needed. To exit a dungeon, players should find and enter that level's escape hole. *Dark Chambers* was also released for the Atari 2600, but the 7800 version has better graphics and more detailed mazes.

Desert Falcon

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 Players (alternating). 1987.

Sometimes referred to as "*Zaxxon* in the sand," *Desert Falcon* has a number of things in common with Sega's arcade classic, primarily its isometric viewpoint and faux 3D graphics. The shooting action is similar as well, but *Desert Falcon* is enhanced by a spiffy power-up system involving combinations of three hieroglyphs that give players invincibility, air bombs, decoy powers, and more. Unfortunately, grabbing the power-ups requires walking, which interrupts the action. Another flaw is that it's

difficult to tell where the player's arrow-shooting falcon is in altitudinal relationship to the enemies, making for some unnecessary deaths. On a more positive note, players must confront a very nicely rendered Sphinx at the end of each level. Other enemies include vultures, warrior phleas, scarabs, flying fish, and phantom gliders. Killing flying enemies increases the base value of treasures. *Desert Falcon* was also released for the Atari 2600, but the 7800 version has better graphics and less sluggish gameplay.

Dig Dug

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

This port of the Atari/Namco coin-op classic (1982) isn't perfect, but it comes about

as close as could be expected on a system of the era. The graphics are slightly blocky, the title screen has been altered, and the flowers and scoreboard don't look quite right, but the characters are a nice, colorful upgrade from those found in the Atari 5200 version of the game. More importantly, the game plays extremely well, and all the details (such as the bonus vegetables) are included. Players guide the title character as he strategically digs underground tunnels, blowing up (with a pump) or dropping rocks on two types of strange looking enemies: Pookas and Fygars, the latter of which breathe fire. Bottom line: *Dig Dug* for the Atari 7800 is a very nice translation of one of the greatest arcade games of all time. Also released for the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and Game Boy. The sequel, *Dig Dug II* (arcade, 1985), was ported to the NES. Followed by: *Dig Dug: Digging Strike* (Nintendo DS).

Donkey Kong

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: ITDC. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Just like the NES version of the game, *Donkey Kong* for the Atari 7800 is missing the Conveyor Belt screen and the animated intermissions. Coin-op faithfuls will notice some relatively minor deficiencies in the graphics as well, such as only two barrels (as opposed to four) standing by Donkey Kong in the first screen. Where the game really drops the ball is in the sound effects and music, which are terribly grating. Instead of squeaking, Mario's patented shoes make an obnoxious, Atari 2600-like sound, and the memorable theme song is entirely absent. Also, the designers put the levels out of order. Coleco did *Donkey Kong* (which is based on Nintendo's 1981 arcade classic) about as well six years earlier for their ColecoVision system.



Dark Chambers and *Desert Falcon* were also released for the Atari 2600, but the 7800 versions have superior graphics and sounds.

Also released for the Atari 2600 and Intellivision. Remade for the Game Boy.

Donkey Kong Junior

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: ITDC. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

As in *Donkey Kong* for the 7800, *Donkey Kong Junior* has off key music, good graphics that could have been a little better, and sound effects that incorporate way too many bleeps, bleeps, and buzzes. Also, the screens are out of order. However, unlike *Donkey Kong*, this game includes all four original levels and even a little animation sequence after the final screen. Both *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Junior* are solidly playable arcade ports, but their flaws are noteworthy. For a better port of *DKJ*, try the NES version, which has tighter controls, superior sounds, and smoother, more polished graphics. Based on Nintendo's 1982 coin-op classic. Also released for the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and ColecoVision. Followed by: *Donkey Kong 3* (arcade, NES), *Donkey Kong Country* (SNES, Game Boy Color, Game Boy Advance), *Donkey Kong 64* (Nintendo 64), and numerous other sequels and offshoots.

Double Dragon

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Based on Taito's 1987 arcade hit, *Double Dragon* for the 7800 has four levels of play, just like in the original. Gamers control Billy or Jimmy Lee as they walk, jump, punch, and kick their way through City Slums, Industrial Areas, Outskirts of the City, and The Enemy Base of the Shadow Boss. Unfortunately, the graphics are fairly blocky, the various moves are hard to pull off, and certain weapons are missing, including dynamite,

rocks, oil drums, and crates. The enemies are very aggressive in this version, making for a tough game to beat. Unlike the superior (in most ways) NES rendition, the 7800 game, like the Master System port, does incorporate the arcade classic's standard two-player simultaneous mode (the NES game compensates for this in some small fashion with a one-on-one fighting mode). *Double Dragon*, which was ported to various other systems, such as the Atari 2600, Atari Lynx, and Neo Geo, spawned a number of sequels, including *Double Dragon II: The Revenge* (arcade, NES).

F-18 Hornet

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1988.



Atari 7800 renditions of two Nintendo coin-op classics, *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Junior*, each pictured with box, instruction manual, and cartridge.

F-18 Hornet puts players in the U.S. Navy, piloting a ground attack fighter jet. Four missions take gamers over the China Lake Naval Weapons Range in the Mojave Desert, through the middle of a Warsaw Pact invasion of Europe, and to Central America and the Indian Ocean. Objectives include dropping supplies to resistance forces, bombing enemy headquarters, firing missiles at planes, tanks, and helicopters, and more. The controls are relatively simple, and the plane lacks machine gun fire. The cockpit control panel depicts an air speed indicator, an engine thrust gauge, an altimeter, a fuel gauge, and other relevant instruments. Despite nice graphics (especially the landscaping and cockpit), *F-18 Hornet* doesn't do a very good job of making the player feel like he or she is actually flying a plane. Similar to: *Ace of Aces*, *Tomcat F-14*, and *Super Huey*.

Fatal Run

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1990.

Fatal Run is sort of like *Pole Position* (or *Pole Position II*, for that matter), but with a post holocaust theme and the ability for players to destroy the cars they are trying to pass. Power-ups and weapons include machine guns, dynamite, shields (for temporary protection), death crystals (which allow players to crash into cars unscathed), rockets, oil, smoke, and nitro (for increasing acceleration and gas mileage). Players can also effect repairs and purchase car parts. The game takes place over 32 levels and, thankfully, a password feature lets players save their progress (a rarity for a 7800 game). Interestingly (not to mention disturbingly and amusingly), at the end of each level, several on-lookers explode, the number of which depends on how fast the player has completed the course.

Fight Night

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Sports/Boxing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

A slow, clunky port of the Commodore 64 game (1986), *Fight Night* for the Atari 7800

gives players 12 humorously rendered (and named) boxers from which to choose, each of whom has his own strengths and weaknesses. Fighting moves are limited to jabs, body blows, fakes (useless), and guarding maneuvers (mostly useless), making the game a simple button-masher. Disappointingly, even though the boxers have special moves, only the computer-controlled boxers can pull them off. The fighters look pretty good, but poor animation, a lack of backgrounds, spotty collision detection, and shoddy sound effects ruin the experience. *Fight Night* is the only 7800 boxing game, so it's too bad it's not a better representation of the sweet science. Armchair pugilists with affection for this era of gaming should stick with *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!* for the NES.

Food Fight

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Action, 1 or 2 Players (alternating). 1987.

A very nice port of Atari's highly entertaining arcade game (1983), *Food Fight* for the 7800 has players guiding gluttonous Charlie Chuck (who starts off on the right side of the screen) around a non-scrolling playfield, avoiding manholes, angry chefs, and flying food items. The goal is to make it to an ice cream cone (which is positioned on the left side of the screen) before it melts. Luckily, Charlie can throw spinach, salads, tomatoes, pies, watermelons, and other food items at the chefs (named Angelo, Zorba, Oscar, and Jacques), who remain in constant pursuit. The graphics and concept in general are simplistic (in a good way), the action is fast and fun, and the theme lends itself well to humor (just watch Charlie as he opens wide to gulp down his ice cream). *Food Fight* was only ported to the 7800, giving owners of the system some much-needed bragging rights.

Galaga

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Slide-and-Shoot, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

A semi-satisfactory port of Namco's awesome arcade shooter (1981), *Galaga* for the

Atari 7800 features solid shooting action, respectable sound effects, enemies that behave like their coin-op counterparts, and, thankfully, challenge stages and dual-ship action (the two defining aspects of the original game). On a less positive note, the player's ship is too small, the graphics have lost some of their crispness and color, the stage indicator badges have been replaced by simple numbers, and the action has been slowed down a little. Despite these weaknesses, *Galaga* is a nice addition to the 7800 library, especially since the game never made it to the 2600 or the 5200. For a more accurate port, fans should pick up *Galaga: Demons of Death* for the NES. *Galaga* spawned numerous sequels and offshoots, including *Gaplus* (arcade), *Galaga 3* (arcade), *Galaga '90* (Turbografx-16), and *Galaga: Destination Earth* (PlayStation).

Hat Trick

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Ibid.
Sports/Hockey, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1987.

This simple hockey title is a faithful port of the Bally Sente arcade game from 1984. Viewed from an overhead perspective, the two-on-two action pits one goalie and a skater against another goalie and a skater. The goalies, which are basically human *Pong* paddles, move in sync with their skaters, and the skaters, which can steal the puck, simply shoot in the direction the joystick is pushed. After each two-minute game, a Zamboni machine cleans up the mess. The controls in *Hat Trick* seem to have a bit of a delayed reaction, but the programmers may have purposely included this perceived flaw to emulate skating on ice. Hockey hounds and fans of the sport in general will want to stick with *Blades of Steel* for the NES. *Pong* purists will want to check out *Video Olympics* for the Atari 2600.

Ikari Warriors

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Imagineering.
Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 Players (simultaneous). 1989.

Despite uneven visuals, *Ikari Warriors* for the Atari 7800 is an excellent port of the 1986

Tradewest arcade game. One or two players trudge through the jungle (which includes rivers, the sea, and bombed-out buildings), shooting or throwing grenades at soldiers, bunkers, helicopters, tanks, and gates. Power-ups, fuel, and extra ammo can be picked up along the way. As in *Front Line* (arcade, ColecoVision) players can occasionally commandeer tanks. The ultimate goal is to rescue the colonel at the end of the last level. The coin-op version of *Ikari Warriors* boasts rotary controls for aiming in all directions, but the 7800 joysticks do a respectable job in this regard. In addition, the arcade game has forced scrolling, which is gone from this version. When compared to the better looking NES rendition, the 7800 game has better controls, a distinct lack of glitches, and faster, fairer gameplay. Also released for the Atari 2600. Similar to: *Commando*.

Impossible Mission

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Man Development Corp. Adventure/Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1987.

Impossible Mission for the 7800 would've been a good adaptation of the puzzling computer game if it weren't for one fatal flaw. The objective is to search a bunch of rooms to find 36 card key pieces for use in making nine card keys that can unlock Professor Elvin Atombender's secret lair. Riding elevators, jumping over obstacles, avoiding robots, and solving puzzles are all part of the action. Unfortunately, some of the pieces are hidden under computer terminals that cannot be searched, literally making the already tough game an impossible mission. The flaw was corrected for the PAL format foreign release, but that didn't do much for American gamers who had wasted their time trying to find unreachable items. Consoles gamers wanting a similar experience without such a flaw should pick up *Impossible Mission II* for the NES.

Jinks

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Softgold. Ball-and-Paddle, 1 player. 1989.

Jinks is a disappointing game that tried to

improve upon the brick-busting formula pioneered by *Breakout* by introducing hyperspace, chomping teeth, a space age theme, a screen-shake feature for freeing the ball from repetitive patterns (which is not a bad idea, actually), four horizontally scrolling playfields, and a triangular paddle that moves freely and can be inverted. Regrettably, sluggish gameplay, a distinct lack of challenge, and primitive audio/visuals (voice effects notwithstanding) ruin the experience. The storyline, which is purely superfluous, involves a renowned Star Fleet pilot getting attacked while researching (and then trying to escape from) a “lush, resource-rich world.” For a better *Breakout*-influenced game, players should try *Arkanoid* (arcade, NES).

Joust

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Joust for the Atari 7800 is an admirable port of the 1982 Williams arcade classic, in which players fly a mounted ostrich around the screen, destroying buzzard riders by bumping into them from above (even slightly above gets the job done). The 7800 game features several details that the 5200 version left out, including the engine-like roar of enemies at the beginning of each level and the buzzards that fly in to pick up the riders that hatch from eggs (in the 5200 game, eggs simply hatch into riders that are already mounted atop buzzards). There is one setback regarding the 7800 controller, however, since pushing the side button again and again to keep the mounted ostrich afloat can get tiresome. To remedy this, players can simply plug in a 2600 joystick. Or play the NES version, which has better controls and more detailed characters. Also released for the Atari 2600 and Atari Lynx. Followed by: *Joust 2: Survival of the Fittest* (arcade). Similar to: *Balloon Fight* (NES).



Joust and *Dig Dug* typify the Atari 7800 library: nice arcade ports of retro favorites.

Karateka

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Ibid. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1988.

Originally a computer game, *Karateka* for the 7800 lost something in translation. Players guide a karate expert through six levels of one-on-one fights against palace guards, punching and kicking (high and low) their way to victory. There are two stances: one for running and one for fighting. Unfortunately, victory is hard to achieve, thanks to a one-life setup and horrible, unresponsive, counterintuitive controls. The computer versions benefit from keyboard input, but there’s no excuse for how poorly the 7800 rendition handles. Also, the graphics seem adequate at first glance, but then the characters start moving, thus revealing the game’s choppy animation. The mission, for those unfortunate souls who chose to ac-

cept it, is to save Princess Mariko from the clutches of an evil warlord named Akuma.

Klax

PUBLISHER: ResQsoft Productions. DEVELOPER: Atari. Action Puzzle, 1 player. 2002.

Klax for the Atari 7800 was programmed during the mid-1980s, but was never officially released until the 2002 Classic Gaming Expo. The cartridge was produced in limited quantities and includes a box, instructions (reprinted from the Atari 2600 manual), and a bonus pamphlet containing an interview with the game's programmer. Gameplay is highly faithful to Atari's 1989 coin-op classic, with players lining up descending (on a conveyor belt) tiles in rows, columns, and diagonals, trying to line up three or more tiles of the same color to remove them from the screen (combos are worth extra points). Players catch each tile on a paddle and can drop it into position below, hold onto it (temporarily), or hoist it back up to the conveyor belt. Letting too many tiles get past the paddle ends the game. Missing are the voice effects (the sounds in general are poor in this version) and the two-player split screen mode (which did make the cut in the NES rendition), but crisp controls and graphics make the game a worthwhile port. Also released for the Atari Lynx, Genesis, TurboGrafx-16, Game Boy, Game Boy Color, and Game Gear.

Kung-Fu Master

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 Players (alternating). 1989.

Based on the 1984 Data East arcade classic, which was one of the earliest beat-'em-up games, *Kung-Fu Master* has players walking, jumping, punching, and kicking their way through five levels of henchmen, knife throwers, midgets, dragons, snakes, killer moths, and other enemies. At the end of each level, a boss, such as Stick Fighter or Boomerang Thrower, lies in wait. The game takes place in the Evil Wizard's temple, where players must rescue Princess Victoria. The mummy ninjas from the fifth level of the arcade game are missing, as is the introductory story sequence. Predictably,

the graphics and sounds have also taken a downturn. However, the real problem with the game is clunky controls as specific moves are hard to pull off with the stiff 7800 joysticks. At least the 7800 version doesn't eliminate jump kicks like the Atari 2600 rendition. Released for the NES as *Kung Fu*.

Mario Bros.

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: ITDC. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

In *Mario Bros.*, players guide the titular Nintendo mascot as he walks over and under water pipe platforms, bumping with his head the floors beneath creeping, crawling shell-creepers (turtles) and sidesteppers (crabs) in order to knock them over. Then, Mario must jump up to that level to kick the fallen creature(s) off the screen. There are also hopping fighterflies, roaming fireballs, and sliding slipice to contend with, the latter of which can freeze floors, making them slippery. Although not as faithfully reproduced as the near-perfect NES version, *Mario Bros.* for the 7800 does feature all the elements that made Nintendo's 1983 coin-op classic great, including the essential two-player simultaneous mode (in which the second gamer controls Mario's brother, Luigi). It even has some of the details that the Atari 5200 rendition missed, such as the screen after the bonus round in which the coins collected are shown on display. Nitpickers will notice that the 7800 version does play a bit fast. Also released for the Atari 2600.

Mat Mania Challenge

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Inspired by Taito's *Mat Mania* (1985) and *Mania Challenge* (1986), *Mat Mania Challenge* boasts lots of moves typical of the genre, including flying kicks, hammer throws, pile drivers, overhead slams, punches, kicks, atomic drops, and more. Fancier moves reward players with higher scores, but simple button-mashing works pretty well. The game looks okay, but lacks the outrageous personality and

raucous nature of “real” pro wrestling (though the wrestlers can climb posts). Also, gameplay feels like fighting the same guy again and again, unlike in the aforementioned arcade games, which feature such distinctive wrestlers as Insane Warrior, Hurricane Joe, and Golden Hulk. The elevated view of the ring is from the side, with a crowd looking on. Similar to: *Pro Wrestling* (NES).

Mean 18 Ultimate Golf

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Sports/Golf, 1 or 2 Players (alternating). 1989.

This hard-to-find golf game gives players a solid (if unspectacular) video rendition of the popular sport. To hit the ball, players follow

the standard three-tap system, which controls the power of the shot and determines whether the ball hooks, slices, or goes straight. Trees, sand traps, water, and other obstacles dot the 18-hole Pebble Beach course, which features a nice variety of layouts. When putting, the game switches from a behind-the-golfer perspective to an overhead view, and players must take into account which way the greens break. *Mean 18 Ultimate Golf* is based on Accolade’s *Mean 18* computer game (1986), which boasts multiple courses and a course editor (elements lacking in the 7800 version).

Meltdown

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

In *Meltdown*, players must protect the reactor cores of 20 different nuclear power plants that have been sabotaged by terrorists. This is done by aiming the light gun at the screen and shooting five different types of “sparkx” that bounce off walls and off a reactor core that is positioned in the middle of the playfield. There are also power crystals to shoot, which can repair control rods, double the size of the shots, give the gun continual fire, and more. *Meltdown* has some nice features (including a password system) and inventive ideas (missed shots create temporary barriers), but the screen annoyingly blinks with every shot fired, and the gun isn’t very accurate. Players willing to overlook these shortcomings will find something to enjoy, as will fans of *Reactor* (a somewhat similar Atari 2600 game).

Midnight Mutants

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Radioactive Software. Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

The closest thing the Atari 7800 has to a *Legend of Zelda*–



Although the Atari 7800 didn’t have a light gun of its very own, *Meltdown* and *Barnyard Blaster* were compatible with the XG-1 light gun, which was packaged with the Atari XE game system. The XG-1 was sold separately for the benefit of 7800 owners.

type of adventure game, *Midnight Mutants* consists of 10 atmospheric, highly detailed areas to explore, including a mansion, a church, a graveyard, and a pumpkin patch. Each area is teeming with zombies, vampires, bats, mutant bosses (including Dr. Evil), and other killable monsters. The goal is to save Grampa Munster (yep, the one from *The Munsters* television show), who is being held at Plasmic Prison. Fortunately, Jimmy, the character players control, can pick up a number of helpful items, including a knife, a cross, an axe, a blaster, a key (for entering the crypt), diamonds (to increase Jimmy's health), and more. Regrettably, there is no password feature for saving progress, and control is a bit awkward, thanks to the isometric perspective and Jimmy's inability to walk diagonally. However, awesome graphics and sounds, nonlinear gameplay, and a fairly unusual concept make the game a worthwhile entry in the 7800 library.

MotorPsycho

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Motorcycle Racing, 1 player. 1990.

MotorPsycho has been called a motorcycle version of *Pole Position II*, and that's a pretty good description of the game. There are four different tracks comprised of winding roads, vehicles to pass, and roadside signs to avoid crashing into. Also, the vehicle has two speeds (high and low), and the objective is to get through each course as fast as possible. Sound familiar? One thing that separates *MotorPsycho* from *Pole Position II* is the fact that the player's vehicle can score extra points by jumping over enemy bikes, arrow signs, cones, and ramps. Also, the roadways in *MotorPsycho* are hilly at times. The game's title is misleading, however, as there is nothing really psychotic about the game, other than the following bit of in-

formation found in the instruction manual: "To save wear and tear on your thumb, strap a rubber band around the joystick button that controls acceleration for long play sessions."

Ms. Pac-Man

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

The lipstick on Ms. Pac-Man's famous mug is about all that's missing in this stellar port of Midway's 1981 arcade classic (which improved upon its predecessor, *Pac-Man*, by featuring four mazes, faster gameplay, moving fruit, and smarter enemy A.I.). The title character's round edges are a little jagged (making the NES versions look more polished), and the



Two excellent Atari 7800 ports of arcade classics: *Ms. Pac-Man*, the world-famous maze game, and *Xevious*, the highly influential vertical scrolling shooter.

playfield is square (as opposed to rectangular) to accommodate the shape of most television screens, but these are small complaints. Unlike the coin-op classic (or the NES versions), this rendition lets players select the starting level, meaning anyone can jump straight to the banana screen. In addition, the pre-game animation introducing the ghosts by name is intact (a feature missing in the NES versions). Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Genesis, and numerous other systems. Followed by: *Pac-Man Collection* (Game Boy Advance), *Pac-Man Fever* (PS2, GameCube), *Pac-Man World 3* (various), and numerous other sequels and offshoots.

Ninja Golf

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Sports/Golf/Side-Scrolling Combat/First-Person Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

A highly original creation, *Ninja Golf* combines three different genres to come up with one very good game. The golfing aspect is simplistic, since all players really do is aim, judge the distance, and hit the ball. The fighting action

is basic as well, consisting primarily of running, jumping, and kicking. After the ball is hit, the ninja runs to the ball, encountering gophers, frogs, ninja guards, water hazards (which include sharks), sand traps (which include snakes), and other enemies and obstacles along the way. Helpful items to pick up include throwing stars, magic shields, warps, and more. When the ball gets to the green, there is no putting. Rather, players hurl ninja stars at a dragon. This graphically impressive, first-person scene is reminiscent of the shuriken-throwing bonus rounds in *Shinobi*.

One-on-One Basketball

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Man Development. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

This is a complete, finely programmed port of the popular computer game (which was simply called *One-on-One*) starring NBA superstars Dr. J. and Larry Bird. The controls take a little getting used to thanks to the stiff 7800 joysticks, but the game has smooth animation, a nicely rendered hardwood floor, and some entertaining one-on-one hoops action. Players can steal, rebound, shoot three-pointers (Bird is the better outside shooter, naturally), charge, travel, get fatigued, dunk the ball (Dr. J is the superior dunker, of course), and more. On a particularly vicious dunk, the backboard will shatter, prompting an angry ref to come out and sweep up the broken glass. Excellent sound effects accompany this amusing scene. Also released for the ColecoVision (as *One-on-One*). Followed by: *Jordan vs. Bird: One on One* (NES, Game Boy) and *Jordan vs. Bird* (Genesis).

Pete Rose Baseball

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Despite slightly sharper graphics and a better color scheme,



Three Atari 7800 sports games: *Hat Trick*, *One-on-One Basketball*, and *RealSports Baseball*, each pictured with box, instruction manual, and cartridge.

Pete Rose Baseball for the Atari 7800 is disappointingly similar to the Atari 2600 version of the game, and one should expect more from a next-generation system. Also, though it plays a good game of America's favorite pastime, and it's superior to the 7800 version of *RealSports Baseball*, the infield defense in *Pete Rose Baseball* could use some fine tuning. Sometimes the player closest to the ball can't reach it, forcing gamers to switch to another infielder who must come all the way over to help. Like its 2600 counterpart, the game features an onscreen umpire and catcher, cheering fans, the ability to move around in the batter's box, a warning track, a fence the ball can bounce off of, and six camera angles (including a behind-the-pitcher perspective).

Planet Smashers

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

The prequel to *Alien Brigade*, *Planet Smashers* has players defending Earth from alien invaders. Despite the familiar concept, the game does have a couple of original aspects: the need to shoot colored-coded warp capsules in order to progress to the next level; and an Earth shield that gets a little weaker with every enemy that gets by the player's starship. Once the shield is gone, the game ends, even if there are starships in reserve. Basic gameplay involves moving a ship around the bottom third of the playfield, shooting fighters, bombers, rammers, and alien cargo vessels while catching cargo (weapon power-ups, a cloaking device, and shield restoratives) as it falls from destroyed alien ships. The bosses are impressive in appearance, but the rest of the game looks pretty ordinary. The sound effects are limited, and the shooting action is tiresome on the thumb, thanks to the 7800's side-button joysticks. The end of the game is basically an advertisement for *Alien Brigade*.

Pole Position II

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 player. 1986.

Pole Position II, in which players speed down twisting, turning streets (from a behind-the-car perspective), passing other cars while avoiding crashing, is one of the weaker arcade ports in the Atari 7800 library, which is unfortunate since it was the pack-in game with the system. It's not as fast or as exciting as Atari's 1983 arcade classic, the explosions aren't as intense, the cars don't look as cool or as colorfully detailed, and the action isn't as smooth. It's far too easy to accidentally down shift (the programmers should have utilized the second fire button as the gear shift instead of the joystick), and the steering wheel from the coin-op classic is greatly missed. On a more positive note, the game does include nicely detailed mountain ranges and all four original racetracks: Test, Fuji, Seaside, and Suzuka. Interestingly, the billboards have been changed to Atari symbols, and the "Qualify for Start" flag that flies across the screen at the beginning of the game has been altered to "Prepare to Qualify," which was the wording in the original *Pole Position*.

Rampage

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Spectral Dimensions. Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Rampage for the Atari 7800 has fewer colors and is less sharp visually than the overrated Bally Midway coin-op classic (1986), but it does include all the enemies and items. In addition, it keeps the essential two-player mode intact (though the three-player mode is missing), and it plays about the same (with the one drawback being the poorly designed 7800 controllers). Players guide giant monsters George the Ape, Lizzie the Lizard, or Ralph the Wolf (who is missing from the NES version of the game) as they climb buildings, smash buildings, eat people (and other items), grab money, and punch helicopters, trolleys, boats, police cars, and tanks. In all there are 132 cities to destroy (the NES version has 128 cities while the SMS game has 50 levels spread over 10 cities). The view is from the side, and the action moves at a slow pace. Also released for the Atari 2600 and Atari Lynx. Followed by: *Rampage World Tour* (various), *Rampage Through Time* (Play-

Station), *Rampage Puzzle Attack* (Gameboy Advance), and other sequels and offshoots.

RealSports Baseball

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

An improvement (but not a significant leap) graphically over the 2600 and 5200 versions, *RealSports Baseball* for the Atari 7800 is a decent looking, nicely animated game with solid controls. It features bunting, eight pitching variations (including fast balls, curves, change-ups, and sliders), and high, low, and normal swings of the bat. However, it does contain a few flaws that put it in league with the 2600 rendition, namely poor fielding, uneven base-running, and lousy sound effects. Also, playing the computer is brutal, especially since there are very few areas of the field to safely hit the ball. Gamers should stick with the superior 5200 version. On a historical note, the RealSports line of games was originally introduced to compete with Mattel's Intellivision sports games, which were generally much more sophisticated than their Atari 2600 counterparts. The RealSports moniker stuck when it was time to create sports titles for the 5200 and 7800.

Robotron: 2084

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Robotron: 2084 for the 7800 would be an acceptable port of the 1982 Williams arcade classic if it weren't for a couple of key setbacks. Unlike the superior Atari 5200 version of the game, which was packaged with a special dual controller holder, the 7800 rendition expects players to somehow hold both controllers at once (or perhaps fit the controllers together with tape, rubber bands, or by some other method). The game is playable with one controller, but this hardly evokes the coin-op experience, as gamers must shoot the way they are moving. Also, it is impossible to shoot while standing still. On a less important note, the graphics aren't quite as colorful, and the sound effects aren't quite as busy. Gamers who

have never played the coin-op classic will get some enjoyment out of the inherently intense action, in which a man runs around the screen, shooting hordes of evil robots and rescuing innocents. However, arcade rats need not apply. Also released for the Atari Lynx. Followed by: *Robotron X* (PlayStation) and *Robotron 64* (Nintendo 64).

Scrapyard Dog

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

The closest thing the Atari 7800 has to *Super Mario Bros.*, *Scrapyard Dog* is the type of side-scrolling platform game that was extremely popular during the late '80s and early '90s. Players guide an ugly, big-nosed guy named Louie through six rounds (17 levels in all) of junkyards, cities, and sewers, jumping on or throwing cans or bombs at gangsters, rats, birds, and other enemies. There are some tricky jumps and lots of obstacles, meaning the shields players can acquire (and store up) do come in handy. Bonus rooms throughout the levels contain mini-games, and there are shops for purchasing super cans, extra lives, and other helpful items. *Scrapyard Dog* is a must-have for 7800 devotees since it's the only game of its type for the system, but the lead character lacks the charisma to be considered a console mascot. Mario, Sonic, Bonk, and Alex Kidd have it all over Louie.

Sentinel

PUBLISHER: ResQsoft Productions. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Light Gun Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 2002.

In *Sentinel*, players must protect a large orb as it glides across the surface of four different alien planets, each of which contains such backgrounds as buildings and mountains. This is done by shooting the various enemies (rings, tubes, stars, cubes, satellites, hover crafts, and the like) that attack the titular orb. Players can also find power-ups, including super shots (smart bombs that explode when the orb is shot), energy pods (which circle the orb), and movement (which increases the orb's vertical speed). When an enemy is killed, the orb absorbs

the resultant energy and grows larger. The protection-oriented gameplay of *Sentinel* evokes *Crossbow*, but it's not as good or as well known as that arcade classic. Originally available only in PAL format (Europe and elsewhere), *Sentinel* was released in NTSC format (U.S. and Canada) by ResQsoft, the company responsible for rescuing the Atari 7800 version of *Klax* from prototype-only status.

Summer Games

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Epyx. Sports/Olympics, 1-8 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1987.

A good looking, nicely playing port of the popular computer game, *Summer Games* for the Atari 7800 lets players compete in six different Olympic events: Diving, 4 × 400-Meter Relay, 100-Meter Dash, Gymnastics, Freestyle Relay, and 100-Meter Freestyle. Some events require precise timing while others demand that players jiggle the joystick back and forth as fast as possible for increased velocity. All are fun, especially when competing head-to-head against another player (up to eight players representing any of 18 different countries can enter, but only two appear onscreen at once). Unlike the 2600 version, the 7800 rendition does not include Rowing or Skeet Shooting. However, a variety of graphical upgrades, including enhanced opening ceremonies, make these omissions fairly easy to overlook. The sequel, *Summer Games II*, was only released for computers.

Super Huey

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Flight Combat Simulator/First-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

This port of the Cosmi computer game suffers from the lack of keyboard control, which is used

in the computer simulation to land, change altitude, control pitch, load and arm missiles, and other such maneuvers. The joystick and fire buttons work fine, however, in Arcade Mode, which has players simply guiding a cursor around the screen, shooting enemy helicopters. Reality Mode is a combination of Arcade Mode and Flight School, the latter of which is more trouble than it's worth for all but the most patient and most dedicated of flight sim fans. The instrument panel in this complicated game depicts ammo supply, radar screen, fuel gauge, rpm readout, compass heading, oil pressure, and more. Fans of *Tomcat: The F-14 Flight Simulator* may want to give *Super Huey* a whirl. The sequels, *Super Huey II* and *Super Huey III*, were only released for computers.



Summer Games and *Winter Games* for the Atari 7800, each pictured with box, instruction manual, and cartridge. Both titles include various Olympic-style sporting events.

Super Skateboardin'

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Sports/Skateboarding/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

Unlike *720°*, *Skate or Die*, and most other skateboarding titles, this cartridge doesn't feature any actual skating moves, such as aerials, rail slides, or hand plants. What *Super Skateboardin'* does have are coffee makers, projectors, radios, TVs, computers, and light bulbs to turn off, the latter of which require jumping in order to reach. The building players skate through is a maze of rooms connected by doorways, elevators, escalators, and air ducts, and it's easy to get turned around. Gamers with a good sense of direction can memorize the routes and item locations after repeated play, but the action doesn't offer enough long-term fun to warrant that kind of attention. The graphics are colorful, and the sound effects are varied, but there's nothing particularly "rad" about the game, other than its use of the now outdated term on the box. Designed by David Crane of Activision fame.

Tank Command

PUBLISHER: Froggo. DEVELOPER: Froggo. Vertical Scrolling Tank Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Players commandeer an XT-87 attack vehicle in *Tank Command*, one of the harder to find games in the 7800 library. The objective is to capture the enemy flag, which is a mere three levels away. The game is short, but the difficulty level amps up in a hurry, making for an uneven gaming experience. Piloting the tank is a dangerous job since the terrain is covered with pillboxes, heavy artillery, camouflaged traps, anti-tank weapons, and other obstacles. Players can blow up missile silos, ammo and fuel dumps, buildings, huts, and other items for extra points, and it's important to refuel when necessary. The pink color scheme is off-putting, but the game has sufficient graphical detail. *Tank Command* is marginally enjoyable, but fans of vertical scrolling war games should stick with *Commando* or *Ikari Warriors*.

Title Match Pro Wrestling

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER:

OPER: Absolute Entertainment. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

A graphical upgrade over the 2600 version of the game, *Title Match Pro Wrestling* for the 7800 nevertheless suffers from the same horrible, needlessly convoluted control technique in which players alternate between "joystick mode" and "button mode." Simple punches and kicks are the easiest, most effective moves since airplane spins, power lifts, rope dives, back drops, bear hugs, and other fancy maneuvers are a chore to pull off and deplete the wrestler of energy. When the wrestler gets pinned or bear hugged, the player can jiggle the joystick quickly to try and escape. Modes of play include One on One and Tag Team Match, the latter of which is more enjoyable (though that's not saying much). The side-view perspective shows a ring, an audience, a camera man, and an overhead scoreboard. Fans of the sport should stick with *Pro Wrestling* for the NES.

Tomcat: The F-14 Flight Simulator

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1989.

Designed by Dan Kitchen (of Activision fame), *Tomcat: The F-14 Flight Simulator* is a complex game in which players must launch (from the flight deck of the U.S.S. Enterprise) and land the titular craft, engage in combat missions (using a computer defense system, machine guns, and three types of missiles), and monitor a variety of instruments (including fuel, altitude, wing angle, and speed). During night flights, players must rely even more on the elaborate instrumentation, especially in combat situations. This cartridge is an updated, more graphically detailed (especially in terms of the cockpit control panels) version of the Atari 2600 game of the same name, but with enemy bogeys that are harder to engage, making for a less enjoyable experience. Similar to: *Ace of Aces*, *Super Huey*, and *F-18 Hornet*.

Touchdown Football

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

The only gridiron game available for the 7800, *Touchdown Football* is flawed almost to the point of being unplayable. The six-on-six action offers plenty of plays to select from (nine formations and three blocking schemes), and the field and players look pretty good. However, field goals are all but impossible to make, the animation is choppy, the action moves much too slowly, and rushing is limited to the quarterback running the ball. The player on defense always controls the free safety. Interestingly, there's only one cheerleader on the sideline, and she looks as though she may have had one too many shots of testosterone. The view of the action is from an elevated side perspective, with the screen scrolling left and right (only 25 or so yards of the field are visible at any given time).

Tower Toppler

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Derived from the computer semi-classic *Nebulus*, *Tower Toppler* is a good looking, highly unusual game in which players guide a frog up stairs, up elevators, across platforms, and over gaps in order to reach the top of eight different smoothly rotating towers. The frog is equipped with snowballs for destroying bouncing cannonballs and flashing blocks, but the rest of the enemies and obstacles, which include evil robots, mutant molecules, flying eyes, and rolling cannonballs, are indestructible. Certain jumps must be timed perfectly, and some floors will vanish, making for a frequently frustrating experience. However, the game has a certain quality that virtually forces players to stick with it until they have at least reached the top of two or three towers. Between each level there's a side-scrolling bonus round in which the frog hops in his sub and stuns and catches fish. The NES version, which is called *Castelian*, is similar, but with different bonus rounds in which the frog hops on clouds and gathers gems.

Water Ski

PUBLISHER: Froggo. DEVELOPER: Froggo. Sports/Water Skiing, 1 player. 1988.

This vertical scrolling game has players maneuvering a boat up the Pharonna River,

pulling a water skier through three mediocre looking levels (Obstacle Slalom Run, Shark & Alligator Main Course, and High-speed Death Run) of rocks, piers, tree stumps, enemy boaters, and other obstacles, some of which, annoyingly enough, are hidden. There are ramps to jump, and the faster the player makes it through the course, the higher their score. The game ends after the third level, but it's very difficult to get there, thanks in part to frustrating controls that take lots of time getting used



Tower Toppler for the Atari 7800, complete with box, instruction manual, and cartridge. The version that was produced for the Game Boy and NES is called *Castelian*.

to. The fire buttons move the skier right and left while the joystick operates the boat, which is a setup that is hardly intuitive. *Water Ski* is one of the harder to find (not to mention harder to play) games for the Atari 7800.

Winter Games

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Epyx.

Sports/Olympics, 1–8 Players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1987.

This nicely realized port of the popular computer game lets players compete in four Olympic events: Speed Skating (side-view two-man race); Ski Jump (points earned for distance and style); Bobsled (viewed from behind); and Biathlon (cross-country skiing and rifle shooting). The game plays very well and is loaded down with graphical detail, but it's missing the Luge, Slalom, and Hot Dog events found in the 2600 version, as well as Figure Skating from the Commodore 64 game. The lavishly produced opening ceremonies do a great job of getting players in the spirit of things, but it's too bad there are no closing ceremonies. It would've been nice to watch the contestants accepting their medals.

Xenophobe

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Despite the lack of a three-player mode and the fact that gamers can only control Mr. M. Brace (as opposed to one of nine different characters), *Xenophobe* for the Atari 7800 is a nice port of the 1987 Bally Midway arcade game (which was undoubtedly inspired by the *Alien* films). Players walk, crawl, crouch, and jump their way through nine different space stations,

hitting and shooting (with a phaser) critters, pods, tentacles (the floor-based tentacles from the arcade game are missing), rollerbabies, and snotterpillars. There are weapons (laser pistol, electric rifle, poofer gun, grenades) and bonus point items (such as skulls and screwdrivers) to pick up and elevators to ride. Some may find the going a bit slow, but the two-player split screen mode (which actually lets gamers play at the same time, unlike the Atari 2600 version) will please most anyone looking to mindlessly kill some aliens. Also released for the Atari Lynx and the NES, the latter version of which is disappointingly bland.

Xevious

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Xevious is an extremely accurate port of the 1982 Atari arcade game. The playfield has been shortened (the score and number of ships remaining appear at the top of the screen), and the blaster targeting sight is closer to the ship, meaning players have to get dangerously close to ground-based targets before they can shoot them. However, the sound effects are about 90 percent accurate, the graphics are nicely emulated, and the much-maligned 7800 joysticks are perfectly designed for the action. Also, scrolling is smooth, and the game handles lots of onscreen activity with seeming ease. There are more than 20 different types of enemies to shoot, and players can select from four difficulty levels. Nitpickers will notice that the ground-based targets don't blink like they do in the coin-op classic and in the NES version. *Xevious* spawned two sequels: *Super Xevious* (arcade) and *Xevious 3D/G+* (PlayStation).

NINTENDO NES

In 1984, the Japanese company Nintendo, which had achieved tremendous success in the arcades with *Donkey Kong* (1981), approached Atari about distributing the American version of their popular Famicom system in the United States. For a variety of reasons (which Steven L. Kent details in his indispensable *The Ultimate History of Video Games*), the prospective deal with Atari failed, and Nintendo took it upon itself to test market their Americanized Famicom (dubbed the Nintendo Entertainment System) in New York City in 1985, leading to a nationwide release in 1986.

Initially, due to the fabled Great Video Game Crash of 1983/1984, U.S. retailers were wary of carrying a new video game system. Wisely, Nintendo marketed their brainchild as more than just a simple game console, packaging the deluxe version of the NES with a mechanical Robot Operating Buddy (R.O.B. for short) and a Zapper light gun (for use with *Duck Hunt* and other target games). They called their video game console an “entertainment system” and referred to its cartridges as “game paks.”

The aforementioned marketing ploy was useful in getting the Nintendo NES on to store shelves, but the true success of the system, at least initially, can be attributed to a little side-scrolling platformer called *Super Mario Bros.*, which astonished grizzled gamers and video virgins alike with its rich colors and sounds, cartoonish graphics, lengthy levels, freedom of

movement, and hidden secrets and surprises. Those who grew up on comparatively primitive previous consoles, such as the Atari 2600 and the ColecoVision, were truly mesmerized by *Super Mario Bros.*’ epic nature and expansive game play.

Scores of other landmark Nintendo-brand NES games followed in the wake of *Super Mario Bros.*, including *Metroid* and *The Legend of Zelda*, and the company began publishing the long-running *Nintendo Power* magazine in 1988. The NES hit its zenith in 1990 with the introduction of *Super Mario Bros. 3*. Released in conjunction with the feature film *The Wizard* (1989), which was more or less an extended commercial for the game, *Super Mario Bros. 3* sold more than 18 million copies worldwide, making it the best-selling video game cartridge of all time. *The Wizard* also showcased the technically advanced Power Glove controller, a black and gray gauntlet that looked really cool and created a lot of buzz, but was extremely inefficient and lacking in precision of movement when it came to actually playing games.

Numerous third-party companies, such as Capcom, Jaleco, and Data East, got in on the NES act as well. In fact, Konami’s *Contra* and *Castlevania* are two of the most fondly remembered games ever released for the system. In a marginally successful attempt to keep third-parties from cranking out lousy and/or unlicensed games, Nintendo had built a lockout chip into the console and forced third-party



A boxed Nintendo NES Control Deck, which Nintendo dubbed, “The Most Challenging Video Game System Ever Developed.”

companies to pay substantial licensing fees in order to produce games for the console. In addition, third-party companies could only produce five games per year, a rule that certain companies circumvented by forming sister companies. Other companies, like Tengen and Sachen, bypassed Nintendo altogether by producing unlicensed games. Authorized game cartridges have an official Nintendo seal of approval (or seal of quality) on the packaging, but that doesn’t necessarily guarantee a great game (as owners of the dreadful *Hydlide* will attest).

During its lifespan, the two-tone gray, boxy looking NES was a staple in homes across America, selling tens of millions of units before its official demise in 1995 (the last Nintendo-brand NES game, *Wario’s Woods*, was released in 1994). One of the best, most enduring things about the system is its sturdy, user-friendly controllers, which are rectangular in shape and feature an eight-way directional pad on the left, a select and a start button in the middle, and a pair of action buttons on the right. This design, which was patterned after Nintendo’s Game & Watch series of handheld

games, is vastly superior to controllers for previous systems, all of which have at least one overriding flaw. Also cool are the two multi-player adapters released for the console: the NES Satellite and the NES Four Score.

No game system is perfect, and the Nintendo NES does have one notable setback: The console lacks durability. Dusty or heavily used cartridges can render the system unreliable by gumming up or otherwise making the intake port less than reliable in loading games. In addition, frequent usage can loosen the connector pins in the intake port, resulting in the loss of connectivity between the cartridge and the console. Finding a used system that works perfectly can be difficult. Nintendo remedied this design flaw in 1993 with the release of a top-loading version of the console, but it was produced in small quantities and is therefore very hard to find, often commanding \$100 or more in today’s collector’s market.

Along with the Atari 2600 and Sony’s original PlayStation, the Nintendo NES is one of the most important, most influential video game systems ever released. It is home to an as-



Nintendo NES console with two controllers and Zapper light gun. Along with the Atari 2600, PlayStation, and PlayStation 2, the NES was one of the most popular video game systems of all time.

tonishing number of revolutionary, genre-defining titles, and it popularized and expanded upon such concepts as beating levels, saving progress (via passwords or battery backup), and exploring vast, lavishly illustrated worlds. Most importantly, it revived (make that resurrected) the American home video game industry.

Today, the NES remains a popular system among hardcore collectors and casual fans alike. For those who don't want to bother with getting an original NES system and a bunch of cartridges, select NES titles are available for download via the Nintendo Wii Virtual Console, which is a phenomenon that has helped introduce a new generation of gamers to the distinct pleasures of retro gaming.

Nintendo NES Games

Abadox: The Deadly Inner War

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Natsume. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

A challenging shooter that fans of *Life Force* and *R-Type* will enjoy, *Abadox* has players using a space ship to battle a giant creature named Parasitis, who feeds on life forms and planets. Players must survive the surface of the

creature, then blast their way down its throat and through its body, using lasers, guided missiles, and orbiting shields to destroy eyeballs, worms, skeleton fish, bacteria, anti-bodies, bosses, and other monsters. Power-ups to grab include super speed, an orbiting barrier shield, twin missiles, a laser gun, multi-directional beams, and more. When the action scrolls vertically, the ship travels downward, which is an unusual trait for the genre. Even more unusual (for the era) are the game's gruesome, graphically rich visuals.

Action 52

PUBLISHER: Active Enterprises. DEVELOPER: Active Enterprises. Multi-Game Compilation, 1 player. 1991.

This cartridge features 52 games, most of which are shoddy and poorly produced: *Fire Breathers*, *Star-Evil*, *Illuminator*, *G-Force Fighters*, *Ooze*, *Silver Sword*, *Critical Bypass*, *Jupiter Scope*, *Alfredo and the Fettuccini's*, *Operation Full-Moon*, *Dam Busters*, *Thrusters*, *Haunted Hills of Wentworth*, *Chill-Out*, *Sharks*, *Megalonia*, *The French Baker*, *Atmos-Quake*, *Meong*, *Space Dreams*, *Streemerz*, *Spread-Fire*, *Bubblegum Rosie*, *Micro-Mike*, *Underground*, *Rocket Jockey*, *Non-Human*, *Cry Baby*, *Slashers*, *Crazy Shuffle*, *Fuzz Power*, *Shooting Gallery*, *Lollipops*, *The Evil Empire*,



The Nintendo NES Four Score, which lets players hook up four controllers for simultaneous, multi-player action; and the QuickShot controller, an oddly designed NES peripheral containing a large, 16-way ball instead of the more conventional directional pad.

Sombrero's, Storm Over the Desert (The Land War), Mash-Man, They Came from Outer Space, Laser League, Billy-Bob, City of Doom, Bits and Pieces, Beeps and Blips, Manchester Beat, Boss, Dedant, Hambo's Adventures, Time Warp Tickers, Jigsaw, Ninja Assault, Robbie and the Robots, and The Action Gamester. Unlicensed.

The Addams Family

PUBLISHER: Ocean. DEVELOPER: Ocean. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the 1991 feature film (which, in turn, was based on the 1960s television series and on the Charles Addams cartoon panels), *The Addams Family* for the NES stars many of the characters familiar to fans of the popular franchise, including Gomez, Morticia, Pugsley, Wednesday, Lurch (who plays music), and Thing (who acts as a shield). Gomez must rescue members of his family from various rooms of his house and the surrounding grounds, avoiding skulls, ghosts, spikes, and other creatures and obstacles (many of which fall very quickly) along the way. There are no weapons, but Gomez can jump on enemies, swim in a pond, paddle down a secret river, and collect

money. The game has lots of atmospheric, richly illustrated areas to explore, plenty of tricky puzzles to solve (such as finding keys to open doors and using a potion to shrink Pugsley), and a nice musical score.

The Addams Family: Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt

PUBLISHER: Ocean. DEVELOPER: Ocean. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the *Addams Family* cartoon series (Hanna Barbera, 1992–1995), *The Addams Family: Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt* finds the chubby son of Morticia and Gomez Addams searching for members of his family (Gomez, Granny, Wednesday, and Uncle Fester), who have been kidnapped and hidden as prisoners in their own home. Each family member holds a piece of music that Lurch must play to unlock the secret passage leading to Morticia, and Thing is on hand to provide clues. Pugsley has no weapons, but he can jump on the various creatures that impede his progress. Pugsley can also crouch, climb, swim, and fly (with the help of beanie caps). *Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt* is much different than its SNES counterpart, in which Pugsley searches for items Wednesday

has hidden around the Addams mansion. Interestingly, it plays more like *The Addams Family* (NES, SNES), but with Pugsley taking over for Gomez.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: DragonStrike

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Westwood Associates. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

DragonStrike for the NES eschews the first-person elements of the computer version of the game, opting instead for free-roaming shooter action. Players guide one of three different dragons (bronze, silver, and gold) through 14 missions, firing lightning bolts, ice balls, fireballs, and other weapons at archers, battleships, carpet mages, giant dragonflies, swamp monsters, bosses, and other enemies. The dragon can fly high to avoid certain obstacles, but must fly low at times to complete various mission objectives. RPG elements are conspicuously absent, but there are power-ups to grab, and the game looks decent and is plenty challenging. Includes battery backup.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes of the Lance

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: U.S. Gold/Strategic Simulations. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

Sporting real-time battles and a side-view perspective, *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes of the Lance* for the NES is based on three things: the computer game of the same name (1988); the first Dragonlance campaign module (*Dragons of Despair*); and the Dragonlance novel, *Dragons of Autumn's Twilight*. Players, controlling one character at a time, guide a band of eight warriors and magic users of varying attributes and skills on a decidedly brief adventure quest. Enemies to battle include giant spiders, Gully Dwarves, ferocious dragons, monstrous Draconians, and more. Rightly dubbed one of the "10 Worst Games of All Time" in the September, 1997 issue of *Nintendo Power*, *Heroes of the Lance* suffers from lousy controls, sluggish game play, and a flawed combat system. Includes battery backup.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Hillsfar

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1993.

This oddly segmented, narrative-deprived RPG lets gamers explore areas in and around Hillsfar, using a character created by the player. Characters are ranked according to strength, intelligence, dexterity, and other attributes that can be built up as the game progresses. Four character classes are available: fighter, mage, thief, and cleric. Activities include searching secret rooms, stunning guards, finding exits, looting gold chests, avoiding traps, blasting obstacles with a rod, competing in Archery contests, using a horse to jump over obstacles, fighting in an arena, gathering information in taverns, and more. Based on the computer game of the same name (1989), *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Hillsfar* for the NES includes battery backup.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Pool of Radiance

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the oft-ported computer simulation (1988), *Pools of Radiance* for the NES, like its personal computer counterpart, does an excellent job of maintaining the spirit and gameplay of the popular pen-and-paper game, *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. The text-heavy cartridge lets players create a party of up to six characters of differing races and classes. The characters are modeled after those found in actual D&D rules sets, and the battles, which display an isometric viewpoint, evoke those found in the AD&D edition of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* book. In addition, the areas to explore are lifted from the *Forgotten Realms* campaign world. Includes battery backup.

Adventure Island

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

Adventure Island, like all games of its type, owes a debt to the mother of all classic side-scrollers, *Super Mario Bros*. To rescue a princess,

players must guide a fellow named Masters Higgins through bright, colorful, nicely illustrated forests, mountains, and caves, grabbing eggs that turn into skateboards (for going faster), axes (for throwing at cobras, skeletons, coyotes, bosses, and other enemies), fruit (for energy), “honeygirls” (for invincibility), and other useful items. There are obstacles to jump over, such as rocks and snails, and missing a cloud jump results in instant death. As in *Super Mario Bros.*, *Adventure Island* is divided into eight worlds, each containing four stages. *Adventure Island* is essentially the same game as *Wonder Boy* (SMS), but with a number of graphical changes. An unusual licensing agreement let Hudson Soft use the same game engine as *Adventure Island*, but not the same characters. Platforming fans won’t be disappointed.

Adventure Island II

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Featuring the return of Master Higgins, *Adventure Island II* improves upon the already enjoyable *Adventure Island* by giving the young man four friendly dinosaurs to ride, each of which can perform a fun-to-use, nicely animated skill: tail-whipping (Blue Camptosaurus), fire-spitting (Red Camptosaurus), swimming (Elasmosaurus), or flying (Pteranodon). The game also has sharper graphics than its predecessor and a special map screen. Good music, diverse environments (caves, forests, deserts, and the like), and stiff challenges only add to the fun. Interestingly, *Adventure Island II*, which is an offshoot of the Sega Master System’s *Wonder Boy* series, stays faithful to the basic elements of the original *Wonder Boy* formula while the Master System sequels, *Wonder Boy in Monster Land* and *Wonder Boy III*, introduce RPG elements and swordplay. *Adventure Island II* was released for the Game Boy as *Adventure Island*.

Adventure Island 3

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Adventure Island 3 is similar to the second game in the series, but includes a fifth dinosaur

pal — Poley Tripetaurus—who can perform a rolling attack. To rescue Jeannie Jungle, who has been kidnapped by aliens, Master Higgins must explore eight islands, each of which is filled with creatures to battle, fruit to eat, and eggs that contain milk bottles (for maintaining energy), axes, boomerangs, time-stops, and other useful weapons and items. There are even keys for opening portals to bonus rounds and secret rooms. *Adventure Island 3* was released for the Game Boy as *Adventure Island II*.

Adventures in the Magic Kingdom

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1990.

Adventures in the Magic Kingdom has players collecting keys by completing five surprisingly challenging mini-games, each of which is based on a real Disney theme park attraction. Pirates of the Caribbean and Haunted House are side-scrolling platformers in which players run, jump, and throw candles at enemies. Big Thunder Mountain is a mine cart game containing such obstacles as dead ends, wrong-way crossing guards, and rolling boulders. Autopia is an overhead view racer with jumps reminiscent of *Bump ‘n’ Jump*, while Space Mountain is a first-person space shooter. Disney fans of all ages will enjoy the atmosphere of the rides, and many will have fun with the trivia questions that are posed, but younger players may find the games to be prohibitively difficult.

The Adventures of Bayou Billy

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Combat/Demolition/Combat Racing/Light Gun shooter, 1 player. 1989.

An atmospheric, richly illustrated, musically adept game set in the Louisiana swamp lands, *The Adventures of Bayou Billy* is unusually diverse, incorporating three entirely different genres. Five of the game’s nine stages consist of *Double Dragon*-style fighting, with players, as a Crocodile Dundee-like hero, punching, kicking, knifing, whipping, and hitting (with a stick) a succession of bad guys and alligators. A pair of shooting stages lets gamers use a Nintendo Zapper or a standard controller

to pick off enemies. Finally, two driving stages, each featuring a behind-the-vehicle perspective, have players shooting bullets and throwing dynamite at planes, helicopters, and a swamp stomper. *The Adventures of Bayou Billy*, which spawned an Archie comic book series of the same name, looks and sounds (voice effects are included) better than it plays.

Adventures of Dino-Riki

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Adventures of Dino-Riki puts players in the titular role of a young man who walks, runs, jumps (over water and other obstacles), and flies his way up five challenging (if graphically plain) stages of jungles, deserts, swamps, and quicksand. Armed with rocks, axes, boomerangs, and torches, Dino-Riki must shoot dinosaurs, spitting dolphins, spitting cobras, dragons, flying cow skulls, flying fish, purple flies, and other enemies, including the following bosses: Pteranodon, Tyrannosaurus, Monster Fly, Triceratops, and Giant Cobra. Power-ups Riki can grab include turbo boots (speed), power fists (upgrades weaponry one level), Airy the bird (flight), and the impressive Macho-Riki, which is a larger Riki who can throw mirror images of himself.

Adventures of Lolo

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Action Puzzle/Maze, 1 player. 1989.

In *Adventures of Lolo*, players guide the title character around each of a seemingly endless number of mazes, grabbing heart framers. When all the hearts have been taken, a chest opens up to reveal a jewel, which Lolo must get to advance to the next level. Certain heart framers contain items for use in trapping or defeating the creatures that roam around each maze, shooting fire, dashing toward Lolo, or otherwise trying to destroy our hero. Enemy creatures include Skull, Medusa, and Rocky, among others. Heart framer items include bridges for crossing over lava, hammers for destroying rocks, ammo for turning monsters into eggs (which can be used to float across

water), and more. Each screen is a puzzle, making the game a brain-straining challenge in later levels. Includes password feature.

Adventures of Lolo 2

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Action Puzzle/Maze, 1 player. 1990.

Despite marginally improved graphics and a somewhat higher level of difficulty, *Adventures of Lolo 2* is a lot like the first game in the series. Players guide Lolo around each of a seemingly endless number of mazes, grabbing all the heart framers to open a treasure chest in order to exit to the next level. Each maze is riddled with such items as trees, flower beds, deserts, rocks, and creatures. Lolo can use emerald framers to trap creatures, magic shots to turn enemies into eggs, bridges to cross lava, hammers to crush rocks, and more. All the enemies from the first game return, but the puzzles, though familiar in design, are new. Gameplay is vaguely similar to *Pengo* (arcade, Atari 5200), but with more emphasis on puzzle solving. Includes password feature.

Adventures of Lolo 3

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Action Puzzle/Maze, 1 player. 1991.

This third and final entry in the *Adventures of Lolo* series for the NES features the same type of heart frame-grabbing, monster-trapping, puzzle-solving action found in the first two games, but this time around players can go at it as either Lolo or his girlfriend, Lala, switching between them as desired. The game also introduces underwater levels, a rainbow egg and key (for accessing level three), and a main map that players must navigate. Another new element is Grandpa's Learning Tree, in which an old man shows players how to solve specific puzzles. Includes password feature.

The Adventures of Rad Gravity

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Interplay Productions. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Rad Gravity is a fun, variety-packed game

in which players, as the titular, big-headed protagonist, must travel to nine different planets and an asteroid belt, using a laser sword, super sword, power pistol, vertigun, maxigun, and crystal bombs to battle a variety of aliens and creatures. Other useful items include: four types of armor; a teleporter; a translator (for deciphering alien text); and an energy disk (for floating over hazardous areas). Activities include: jumping over obstacles (Rad jumps higher in low-gravity worlds); riding elevators; shutting down a security system; opening doors to secret areas; stopping a conveyor belt; finding a gravity device; solving puzzles; running around upside down; and much more. *The Adventures of Rad Gravity* is long and challenging, meaning the password feature for saving progress is a virtual necessity.

The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Radical Entertainment. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on Jay Ward's classic, satirical cartoon series, this game has players guiding Rocky and Bullwinkle through five levels, including mountains, a pirate ship, and a moving train. Play alternates between the flying squirrel and the charging moose as needed. For example, Rocky can fly to otherwise unreachable platforms, but only Bullwinkle can climb stairs. Both are equipped with bombs for fending off Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale, who pester our heroes with bombs of their own. Jumping is slight, meaning it's difficult to leap over the various snakes, lizards, spiky balls, and other obstacles. Soda cans restore health, and keys provide access to certain stages. Plagued by sluggish controls, poor animation, repetitive sound, and uninspired platforming, *The Adventures of Rocky & Bullwinkle and Friends* doesn't do its source material justice. The game is much different than its Genesis and SNES counterparts, which include throwable nuts and berries and a pair of mini-games (among other differences). The Game Boy version is different as well.

Adventures of Tom Sawyer

PUBLISHER: Seta. DEVELOPER: Seta. Platform Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

Loosely based on characters created by Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* finds the titular scruffy scamp asleep in class, dreaming of floating down the Mississippi on a mission to rescue Becky Thatcher. The resultant adventure takes Tom through six levels (The Abandoned Ship, Down the River, Through the Forest, In the Haunted House, In the Sky, and Deep in the Cave), most of which are side-scrolling, and most of which involve running, jumping, climbing, avoiding obstacles (barrels, rocks, hail, and the like), throwing rocks, and shooting a slingshot (at a variety of enemies, including birds, bats, scorpions, mutant moths, and skeleton warriors). The vertical scrolling action takes place on a raft, which Tom must steer past whirlpools, fish, penguins, and eagles. In two-player mode, the second gamer controls Huckleberry Finn. Though drab visually, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* presents a fairly entertaining challenge.

After Burner

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

A pale, but playable port of Sega's immersive, graphically rich 1987 arcade game (the sit-down version of which had a spiffy rotating cockpit), *After Burner* puts players at the helm of the F-14 Thunder Cat jet (viewed from behind), which is equipped with air-to-air guided missiles and a vulcan cannon for blasting supersonic fighters, class 1 fighters, harrier class jump jets, and helicopter gunships. To dodge the enemies and their fire, players can fly upside down, use the after burner, or perform a rolling maneuver, but the jet stays near the center of the screen during flight (the sky and horizon tilt and spin in accordance with the jet's turns and rolls). Special bonus stages let players refuel and acquire more missiles. Unlike the Master System version, the NES game does not include the "Get Ready!" voice effects. Unlicensed. Also released for the Sega 32X. Sequels include: *After Burner II* (arcade, Genesis), *After Burner*

III (Sega CD), *After Burner Climax* (arcade), and *After Burner: Black Falcon* (PSP).

Air Fortress

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Air Fortress has players piloting a spaceship through an Air Base, shooting beams at such repetitious enemies as missiles, robotic machines, and generic looking mechanical shapes. Energy power-ups and crash beam bullets collected in the Air Base will determine the ship's initial power settings for the next area of the game, which is the main body of the Air Fortress where players abandon the spaceship in favor of a jetpack. In the Air Fortress, in addition to shooting enemies, players must navigate tunnels to find the central reactor of said fortress, blow it up, and then find their way out in order to reach the next Air Base (there are eight levels in all). *Air Fortress* could use a wider variety of power-ups and enemies, but it's certainly playable. Includes password feature.

Airwolf

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Acclaim. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1989.

Based on the CBS TV series (1984–1986), *Airwolf* for the NES is 20 different missions of helicopter action. Players pilot their supersonic jet copter — which is outfitted with a satellite transmitted map display, a Doppler sensor, and a radar jammer — through the not-so-friendly skies (which are viewed from inside the cockpit of the helicopter), using machine guns and heat-seeking missiles to destroy flying missiles, ground missiles, and enemy planes. When it's time to rescue POWs, the game switches to a side-view perspective, where players must avoid obstacles (control towers, mountains, and enemy fire) and land gently (ala *Lunar Lander*) to keep from crashing. A similar landing method is used to make repairs and restock ammunition at a friendly airbase. The recognizable (to fans of the show) theme music in *Airwolf* is nice, but it hardly makes up for the dull gameplay.

Al Unser Jr. Turbo Racing

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 player. 1990.

Endorsed by Indy racer Al Unser, Jr., who provides tips on how to handle each course, this elaborate racing simulation lets players drive Unser's car or design one of their own. Customizable components include color, speed, acceleration, durability, suspension, pit crew speed, and turbo, the latter providing up to 40 mph more than the standard velocity. The game sports a behind-the-car perspective and boasts 16 different twisting, turning, courses, each in a different country. Prior to entering a World Grand Prix Series (as opposed to one of two different Time Trial modes), players must race a qualifying lap to determine their pole position. Includes battery backup. Followed by: *Al Unser Jr.'s Road to the Top* (a go-kart racer for the SNES).

Alfred Chicken

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Twilight. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1994.

One of countless quirkily cute platformers of the era, *Alfred Chicken* finds the title character on a mission to rescue a hot chick named Floella from the fiendish Meka Chickens. Tasks related to this endeavor include firing bombs at monsters, dive-bombing enemies, pecking through ice, picking up invincibility presents, opening doors to secret rooms, jumping on moving platforms, bouncing on springs, swimming like a duck, and much more. To complete a level, every balloon must be popped, and diamonds can be grabbed for extra points and lives. Blocks must be pecked to allow Alfred access to otherwise restricted locations, giving the game additional challenges. In addition, unlike most side-scrollers, *Alfred Chicken* frequently scrolls vertically. An excellent soundtrack is icing on the proverbial cake. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *Super Alfred Chicken* (SNES).

Alien Syndrome

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Although not as challenging or as graphically rich as Sega's original 1986 arcade game, *Alien Syndrome* for the NES is preferable to its Sega Master System counterpart, thanks in large part to the NES game's inclusion of the two-player simultaneous mode. The game evokes the *Alien* film series as players, controlling Ricky or Mary, explore seven different maze-like, multi-room spaceships in order to shoot H.R. Giger-influenced aliens, rescue captive humans, and exit before the timer runs out. Each spaceship is equipped with a number of helpful items, including warps, fireballs, laser cannons (an especially effective weapon), and flame throwers. A mapping system, which is something the Master System port lacks, helps players keep track of their position in relation to the captives. Unlicensed. Also released for the Game Gear. Remade for the PSP and Wii.

Alien 3

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Probe Software.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1993.

Based on David Fincher's disappointing film from 1992, *Alien 3* for the NES is much better than its silver screen counterpart. Players guide Lt. Ripley through six stages of the Fiorina 161 prison colony (consisting of maze-like tunnels, passageways, and ladders), using a machine gun, grenades, and a flame thrower to battle the trademark creepy creatures. A motion tracker warns Ripley of nearby aliens and prisoners, the latter of which are cocooned and must be rescued. Atmospheric visuals and music, solid controls, and a nice mix of exploration and intense action make *Alien 3* one of the best movie-based games for the system. Also released for the Genesis, SNES, and Game Gear (the overhead view Game Boy version is much different).

All-Pro Basketball

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai.
Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

A game of five-on-five hoops (players can go at it head-to-head or team up against the computer), *All-Pro Basketball* features eight dif-

ferent teams, sporting such fake names as the L.A. Breakers and the New York Slicks. Features include three-pointers, slam dunk close-ups (ala *Double Dribble*), league play, fouls, steals (which the computer opponent is especially good at), jump passes, substitutions for tired players, and more. The overhead view court, which scrolls vertically (and a just a bit horizontally), goes black for a second and switches sides every time the ball crosses half court, making for a discombobulating experience.

Alpha Mission

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Based on SNK's 1985 arcade game, *Alpha Mission* is a battle against the invading Seven Stars Alliance. Players guide a SYD fighter ship up the screen, shooting lasers and missiles at ground-based targets and at a variety of circling, zigzagging, diving, and otherwise pesky airborne alien vessels. By flying over letter icons, the SYD can increase its speed, warp ahead or back three levels, and boost the power of its lasers and missiles. An arsenal of special weapons, including eight-way fire, guided missiles, thunder, and nuclear warheads, can also be acquired. *Alpha Mission* looks and plays similar to *Xevious*, but is less nuanced, less balanced, and less enjoyable. Followed by: *Alpha Mission II* (arcade, Neo Geo, Neo Geo CD).

Amagon

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: Aicom. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

In *Amagon*, players control the titular Marine, who must run, jump, and shoot his way through the plains, jungles, rivers, rain forests, mountains, and beaches of a monster-infested (though bland looking) South Pacific island. Amagon is equipped with a machine gun for battling the dinosaurs, bats, snakes, wasps, skeletons, aliens, elephant men, hippo demons, and other creatures. Transforming Amagon into Magagon, which is done by finding a mega-key and scoring at least 5,000 points, makes the character tougher and gives him laser beams and a megapunch maneuver. The action leaves little margin for error (the one-hit kill

system will frustrate many), making for a difficult game.

American Gladiators

PUBLISHER: Gametek. DEVELOPER: Incredible Technologies. Sports/Extreme, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Inspired by the television series (1989–1996), *American Gladiators* for the NES lets players compete in five different events: Joust, Wall, Human Cannonball, Powerball, and Assault. Activities include battling with padded sticks, climbing walls while trying to avoid getting knocked off, swinging on ropes to knock the other Gladiator off his or her platform, throwing balls into a chute, running through obstacle courses, shooting missiles, and more. The graphics are plain, but the events are a fun (if ephemeral) diversion from standard sports video games. Includes three “real” Gladiators from the TV show: Gold, Laser, and Nitro. The NES cartridge lacks the Atlasphere and Eliminator events, which are in the Genesis and SNES versions.

Anticipation

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Rare. Board Game, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Anticipation has up to four players competing to identify pictures being drawn onscreen by the computer. The first player to buzz in must identify the picture correctly to move their marker — shoes, ice cream, a teddy bear, or a trumpet — around a color-coded game board. There are 16 picture categories, including music, weaponry, math, tools, food, and clothing. In easier levels of play, the computer connects dots to create the pictures. In advanced levels, there are few or no dots. Advanced levels also introduce feature squares and drop-out squares, both of which should be avoided. Fans of *Pictionary* and *Win, Lose or Draw* should enjoy *Anticipation*.

Arch Rivals

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Rare. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A precursor to the two-on-two arcade stylings of *NBA Jam*, *Arch Rivals* was first released in the arcades in 1989 by Bally/Midway, scoring big points with fans for its irreverent, over-the-top gameplay. Players dribble, shoot, pass, rebound, dunk, and play defense, but they can also punch one another (the most enjoyable aspect of the game) and pull down each other’s shorts. The referee only gets in the way, and players sometimes slip on the trash thrown onto the floor by fans. Although not as fast or as fun as *Double Dribble* (another NES favorite), *Arch Rivals* is entertaining, especially in small doses. Not surprisingly, the Genesis version slam dunks the already impressive NES game with voice effects and richer, more color-



Two NES hoops titles: *Arch Rivals*, which is based on the 1989 arcade game, and *Jordan vs Bird: One on One*, which has its roots in the 1984 computer game *Julius Erving and Larry Bird Go One-On-One*.



Arkanoid for the NES, with box and special “Vaus” controller, which is a rotary device similar to the Atari 2600 paddle controllers.

ful graphics. Released for the Game Gear as *Arch Rivals: The Arcade Game*.

Archon

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Board Game/Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A fine translation of the groundbreaking 1983 computer game, *Archon* for the NES is similar to *Battle Chess*, but uses such mythological creatures as wizards, unicorns, and goblins instead of traditional chess pieces. When two characters land on the same spot, the action switches to a combat arena in which players battle to the death with swords, fireballs, clubs, or other weapons. The chess board squares fluctuate between light and dark, giving one side or the other the advantage, and certain characters can conjure spells to teleport, summon the elements, reverse color patterns, and revive or regenerate weary or dead creatures. *Archon* is an excellent game of strategy, broken up nicely by intensive battles.

Arkanoid

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Ball-and-Paddle, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Packaged with a special “Vaus” rotary controller for precise and speedy paddle movement, *Arkanoid* is a stellar port of Taito’s own 1986 arcade game. Players guide a paddle along the bottom of the screen, rebounding a bouncing energy ball off of various space walls, eliminating colored bricks as they are hit. There’s space debris to contend with, and certain walls contain power capsules that can widen the paddle, give the paddle laser fire, warp the game to the next round (there are 33 rounds in all), split the ball into three, and more. *Arkanoid* is a terrific expansion of the brick-busting concept pioneered by *Breakout*. Similar to: *Thunder & Lightning* (arcade, NES). Followed by several sequels (including *Arkanoid: Doh it Again* for the SNES) and a remake (*Arkanoid DS* for the Nintendo DS).

Arkista’s Ring

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: American Sammy. Maze Shooter/Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

Arkista’s Ring is a simplistic, action-oriented RPG in which players guide an elf girl named Christine through villages, castles,

graveyards, caves, and other colorful locations (which are viewed from overhead), firing arrows at such enemies as scorpions, goblins, wolves, skeletons, bats, magicians, and ninjas. Killing enough baddies makes a key appear, which unlocks the next stage. After stage 31, the stages repeat, but get harder. Defeated enemies frequently leave behind a pouch containing an item or a power-up, such as a fire wand, a holy stick, armor, a helmet, a shield, or a ninja stunner. *Gauntlet* fans may enjoy *Arkista's Ring*, but *Legend of Zelda* buffs will find it overly linear and lacking in complexity.

Astyanax

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

Based on Jaleco's *The Astyanax* (arcade, 1989), *Astyanax* for the NES puts players in the titular role of a teenager who must rescue Princess Rosebud from the castle of wizard Blackhorn. As he runs, jumps, ducks, and teleports his way through 12 levels of play, Astyanax must use a broad axe, a spear, and a sword to fend off a variety of monsters. He can conjure spells that freeze or damage all on-screen enemies, and he can smash stone idols to reveal recovery potions, extra lives, weapon power-ups, and more. The controls and collision detection could use some fine tuning, and the arcade version has richer graphics, but *Astyanax* is notable for its nifty (if unintentionally funny), *Ninja Gaiden*-like cut scenes.

Athena

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: Micronics. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1987.

Marred by poor collision detection, unresponsive controls, bland graphics, cruddy sound effects, and weak weaponry, *Athena* gives platformers a bad name. Players guide the big-headed, poorly animated title character through Fantasy World, which is populated with ladders to climb, obstacles to jump (or double jump) over, oddly cartoonish monsters to kick (or otherwise destroy), brick walls to smash, and more. Pegasus wings enable Athena

to fly, shell necklaces change her into a mermaid, and she can grab a number of other useful items, including hourglasses, swords, billy clubs, magic sticks, weapon power-ups, helmets, shields, armor, and life flowers. *Athena* looks a lot like its arcade counterpart (SNK, 1986), but that's faint praise indeed.

Athletic World

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Sports/Exercise, 1 player. 1987.

Athletic World makes players get up off the couch and onto the Nintendo Power Pad control mat (or Bandai's own Family Fun Fitness pad). By physically walking, jogging, running, and jumping in place on side A of the Power Pad, players guide the onscreen character through five tiring events: Hurdles, Animal Trail, Dark Tunnel, Hop-a-Log, and Rafting. Depending on the mode of play selected, there are obstacles to hop over or otherwise avoid, including moles, bats, frogs, fish, logs, and water. Sometimes it is necessary for the player to drop to his or her knees. Although it has flat graphics, *Athletic World* is a fun and challenging exercise tool that fans of *World Class Track Meet* will enjoy.

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the 1991 cartoon series (which in turn was based on the 1978 B-movie semi-classic), *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* for the NES puts players in control of Chad Finletter, who must run and jump through four monotonous stages, plus a fifth stage that appears after the credits have ended. To stomp a tomato, it must be jumped on in the direct center, making for a frustrating central gameplay element, especially since there are no weapons. The buildings and city streets are very nicely illustrated, and the running and jumping action is broken up somewhat by ladders, conveyor belts, and other staples of the genre. However, the game remains a disappointment to fans of the franchise. Also released for the Game Boy.

Baby Boomer

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Baby Boomer is an unusual game in which players use Nintendo's Zapper gun to help a baby make it through a series of hazards and to his mother. While the baby crawls from left to right, players must shoot fireworks, spiders, ghosts, bats, and other obstacles while avoiding shooting gold nuggets, which the baby will gather for extra lives. Milk should be shot or the baby will get hungry, and a variety of items can be shot for extra points. Puzzle elements come into play as well. For example, clouds can be shot to form ice bridges, and shooting valve handles can determine which pipes the baby crawls through. Hampered by bland graphics and lousy collision detection, this unlicensed oddity was Color Dreams' first game.

Back to the Future

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Overhead View Action, 1 player. 1989.

Loosely based on the 1985 feature film, *Back to the Future* for the NES has players guiding Marty McFly up a vertically scrolling screen, collecting clocks while avoiding bees, hula hoop girls, trash cans, and other obstacles. McFly can throw bowling balls at enemies, grab skateboards that make him go faster (time is a major factor), and jump over manholes. Four different mini-games let McFly shoot milk shakes at bullies, block hearts from his mom, catch guitar notes, and drive up a road while maintaining a speed of 88 mph. The game is playable, but it frequently ignores the plot of the movie, and it has a disappointing ending and crude graphics and sounds. *Paperboy* fans may find something here to enjoy.

Back to the Future Part II & III

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Back to the Future Part II & III plays somewhat similar to *Super Mario Bros.* (complete with enemies that look like Spiny and Goomba), but adds a number of frustrating complications, including tricky puzzles. For example, planting an acorn in 1955 produces a

climbable tree in 1985. In addition to running, throwing projectiles, and jumping on platforms and on top of enemies, players must look for and enter object rooms that contain a mini-game involving collecting a certain number of watches within 60 seconds while avoiding cacti, quicksand, and other obstacles. Beating a mini-game grants players an object that must be taken to the correct puzzle room, wherein waits a word scramble mini-game. *Back to the Future Part II & III* follows, to some degree, the plots of the 1989/1990 feature films, including such elements as Marty traveling through time and Biff stealing an old sports almanac.

Bad Dudes

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

When compared to the 1988 Data East arcade original (which was called *Bad Dudes vs. Dragon Ninja*), *Bad Dudes* for the NES suffers from flickering graphics, choppy controls, poor voice effects ("I'm Bad!"), and the lack of a two-player simultaneous mode. The game, famous for its campy storyline in which ninjas have kidnapped the president, plays like a poor man's *Double Dragon*, with gamers walking, jumping, punching, and kicking their way through seven levels (City, Big Rig, Sewer, Forest, Freight Train, Cave, and Factory) filled with mindless ninjas, plus some dogs, samurai, and super warriors. There are only two types of weapons to grab: knives and nunchuks. President Ronnie (based on Ronald Reagan) from the arcade version has been replaced with a man resembling George H. W. Bush (who was president at the time of the NES release).

Bad News Baseball

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

This fun, fast paced baseball game appears to have been made with younger players in mind, but that doesn't mean it's not a substantive experience. Gamers can bunt, pick runners off bases, change the batting order and field positions, send in pinch hitters, decide on

the starting pitcher, and select their starting line-up from a roster of (fictional) players ranked according to such categories as fielding ability, running strength, arm strength, and home run hitting ability. Pitchers, which are ranked by stamina and ERA, can throw curve balls, screwballs, forkballs, and change-ups. What makes *Bad News Baseball* kid-friendly are cute animations, voice effects, juvenile players (boys *and* girls), and bunny rabbit umpires. Includes password feature.

Bad Street Brawler

PUBLISHER: Mattel. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

In *Bad Street Brawler*, players guide a dorky looking dude named Duke Davis through five areas (City Park, Streets, Docks, City Center, and Railroad Yard), using a variety of moves (drop kick, punch, head butt, ear twist, and the like) to battle a lame assortment of boxers, gorillas, punks, bulldogs, bikers, basketball players, and other enemies. There are 15 different fighting moves, but only three can be used per level. As in the vastly superior *Double Dragon*, *Bad Street Brawler* lets players grab weapons from certain enemies, but *Brawler* makes players throw the weapons in the trash (teaching an invaluable lesson, no doubt). In addition, Duke, unlike the boys from *Double Dragon*, is constrained to a single plane of movement. Compatible with the ill-fated Nintendo Power Glove.

Balloon Fight

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Balloon Fight plays a lot like *Joust*, but replaces the ostrich-mounted knights with balloonists who fly by flapping their arms. The objective is to fly around bumping into enemies from above (while avoiding being bumped into from below), thereby popping their balloon and sending them parachuting downward. Hitting the enemy again on his way down makes him drop into the water below. Flying too close to the water puts players in danger of getting eaten

by a fish, which is similar to The Troll of the Lava Pits in *Joust*. If it takes too long to defeat all the enemies, a lightning storm will occur. Like its coin-op counterpart (Nintendo, 1984), *Balloon Fight* contains a special side-scrolling mode where players float along popping balloons while avoiding lightning, making a great (if largely unoriginal) game even better.

Bandai Golf: Challenge Pebble Beach

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Sports/Golf, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

Named after the famous coastal golf course in California, *Challenge Pebble Beach* is 18 holes of no-nonsense golf. Players can select their clubs, handicap their game, tee off from the back tee or regular tee, and, depending on the club and type of shot selected, control the ball's flight, direction, and spin. The speed and direction of the wind are overriding factors, as are a variety of hazards, including roughs, bunkers, water, slopes, and rises. Players are given a cross-sectional and bird's-eye view of each hole, along with two different close-ups of the greens and their surroundings. The iconic Pebble Beach was featured in various other video games, including *Pebble Beach Golf* (arcade), *True Golf Classics: Pebble Beach* (SNES), and *Pebble Beach Golf Links* (Genesis, 3DO, Saturn).

Bandit Kings of Ancient China

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1-7 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Bandit Kings of Ancient China takes place at the dawn of the 12 Century, when the evil, power-hungry Gao Qui has seized all imperial authority. As a bandit leader, it is up to the player (and up to six friends) to wage war against Gao Qui and his soldiers. This relatively complex process includes: fighting battles on a hexagonal playfield; deploying and instructing units across mountains, ice, planes, lakes, castles, and other terrain; using four types of attacks (melee, archery, magic, and duel); trading fur for gold; building towns; promoting agriculture; recruiting, imprisoning, exiling, and executing prisoners; dealing with such hin-

drances and special events as taxes, aging, snowstorms, riots, and epidemics; battling wild beasts to increase popularity; and much more. Players are ranked according to strength, dexterity, wisdom, integrity, mercy, courage, and other attributes. Similar Koei games include: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Nobunaga's Ambition*, and *Genghis Khan*.

Barbie

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Unlike most other *Barbie* games, this one is a side-scrolling platformer. Players guide the famously skinny, famously blonde doll as she walks, jumps, and throws crystals through five dream-induced levels: The Mall (Sports, Toy Store, Boutique); The Center of the Mall (Galleria, Waterfalls, Food Court, Pizzeria); The Beach (Coral Reef, Sand Castle, Throne Room); The Soda Shop Part One; and The Soda Shop Part Two (Fast Food, Thick Shakes). Crystals can be thrown at enemies, but are also given to animals and other friends in exchange for favors. For example, a dog will steal the enemy's tennis ball, a toucan will act as a platform, and a dolphin will use its tail to tug Barbie through the water. The action is slow, but a nice blend of puzzles and platforming makes the game fairly enjoyable, especially for those who don't mind lots of pink and purple.

The Bard's Tale

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

The Bard's Tale for the NES is a scaled down (smaller with fewer dungeons) port of Electronic Arts' *Wizardry*-influenced computer game from 1985, which was titled *Tales of the Unknown, Volume I: The Bard's Tale*. In traditional dungeon-crawler fashion, players explore maze-like areas (a wine cellar, sewers, towers, and a castle) to find treasure, and battle monsters to gain experience and to level up a party of six characters consisting of wizards, warriors, hunters, bards, sorcerers, and the like.

Fights are text-based, and actions are initiated by selecting from such commands as guard, cast, use item, equip, conjure, fight, run, talk, Bard song, and attack. Two views of the action run concurrently: overhead and first-person (pseudo-3D). The pubs in the kid-friendly NES version sell root beer and grape juice instead of beer and wine. Includes battery backup.

Barker Bill's Trick Shooting

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Although not as well known as *Duck Hunt*, *Barker Bill's Trick Shooting* is a better, more colorful, more versatile game. Using the Nintendo Zapper, players take aim and fire at various targets through four different areas: Balloon Saloon (shoot balloons before they reach the top of the screen); Flying Saucers (shoot saucers that a man and his assistant throw into the air); Window Pains (shoot falling items through open windows); and Fun Follies (cycle through the previous events). Fun Follies also includes Trixie's Shot (shoot coins a dancing woman holds out) and Bill's Thrills (shoot items before they fall on a woman's head). Longtime Nintendo fans will recognize the laughing dog from *Duck Hunt*, who pops up (but shouldn't be shot) in Balloon Saloon.

Baseball

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1985.

This NES launch title lacks a season mode, but it does include stealing, hit and run plays, bunts, and tag ups. The computer controls fielding, meaning the defense only has to worry about pitching and throwing the ball to the proper base. Batting and pitching require the simple press of a button, but the control pad can be used to vary the speed and direction of pitches, which include fast, regular, curve, slow, and screwball. The teams in *Baseball* are as generic as the game itself, which has an overhead/slightly angled view of the diamond. As in many sports video games, the two-player mode is recommended.

Baseball Simulator 1.000

PUBLISHER: Culture Brain. DEVELOPER: Culture Brain. Sports/Baseball, 1–6 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1990.

Baseball Simulator 1.000 offers solid, fast paced gameplay and lots of features, including seasonal play (5, 30, 60, or 165 games), full editing for up to six teams, pinch hitters, pick-offs, the shifting of fielders, substitutions, six different stadiums, and saveable stats (via battery backup). What truly sets the game apart from the pack is the zany, laugh-inducing fun of Ultra Play, which allows players to jump super high, throw pitches that disappear or speed up in mid-air, hit balls that explode or knock out the fielder, and more. The perspective is the typical behind-the-batter view, switching to overhead when the ball gets hit into play. Followed by: *Super Baseball Simulator 1.000* (SNES).

Baseball Stars

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK.
Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

A favorite among NES sports fans, *Baseball Stars* is a highly enjoyable rendition of America's favorite pastime, giving armchair athletes the ability to: alter starting lineups; hire, fire, and trade players (including females); improve the players' hitting, batting, running, defense, chance, and prestige; improve the pitchers' stamina and speed; and change player names and team logos. The game also includes lead-offs, steals, pickoffs, diving catches, jumping catches, the ability for players to climb walls, and other fun features. Includes battery backup. Followed by: *Baseball Stars Professional* (arcade, Neo Geo).

Baseball Stars II

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Romstar.
Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Baseball Stars II is fun like the original game, but it does take away one of the more enjoyable features of *Baseball Stars*: the ability to alter the names of the teams and the players. Luckily, the audio/visuals have been

spruced up a bit, and gamers can still purchase and trade players, dive for grounders, pick off runners, earn money to improve player stats, and much more. Like *Baseball Stars*, the sequel lacks Major League licensing, meaning fake team and player names are used. Includes battery backup. Followed by: *Baseball Stars Color* (Neo Geo Pocket Color).

Bases Loaded

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

One of the more noteworthy sports titles in the NES library, the original *Bases Loaded* helped popularize the behind-the-pitcher camera angle, and it is famous for its use of “bean balls” that hit batters in the face, sometimes causing a bench clearing brawl. Each of the game's 12 teams is comprised of 30 players, each rated according to batting average or ERA. The game lacks MLB or MLBPA licensing, but it does offer a Pennant mode comprised of 132 games. Other features include bunts, steals, pickoffs, pinch hitters, relief pitchers, voice effects, passwords for saving progress, and more. Also released for the Game Boy. Based on Jaleco's 1987 arcade game.

Bases Loaded II: Second Season

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Tose.
Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Bases Loaded II adds a few new features to the franchise, including additional camera angles, faster fielders (who are too small), and the ability for fielders to dive. However, the original *Bases Loaded* has better gameplay. One curious new feature is the use of biorhythms, which track the players in three different categories: physical, sensitivity, and intellectual. When a player's readings are low, he should probably be pulled from the lineup. Includes password feature. This was the first of three NES sequels in the *Bases Loaded* series, which spawned several games for other systems, including the SNES (*Super Bases Loaded* #s 1–3) and Saturn and PlayStation (*Bases Loaded 96: Double Header*). Followed by: *Ryne Sandberg Plays Bases Loaded 3* (NES).

Bases Loaded 4

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Tose. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

Bases Loaded 4 wisely drops the perfect game goal of *Ryne Sandberg Plays Bases Loaded 3*, but keeps the oddly disconcerting behind-second-base fielding perspective intact. When a player wins 70 regular season games, he or she enters the Super Series championship round. A slaughter rule dictates that if a team is ahead by nine or more runs in the bottom of any inning, they will automatically win, and players are awarded black (bad) or white (good) stars depending on the quality of their performance. Like the first three games in the series, *Bases Loaded 4* lacks MLB and MLBPA licensing. Includes password feature.

Batman

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.



Two original super-hero titles for the NES: *Batman*, which is based on the 1989 Tim Burton film, and *Captain America and the Avengers*, which is *not* based on the 1991 Data East arcade game.

Inspired by Tim Burton's 1989 film, *Batman* puts players in the role of DC's Dark Knight Detective, who works his way through five exciting stages: Gotham City, Axis Chemical Factory, Underground Conduit, Laboratory Ruins, and Cathedral. Batman can punch, in addition to gaining three optional Bat-weapons: a spear gun, a dirk (which shoots in three split directions), and a Batarang. These items are useful in battling a variety of obstacles and bad guys, including homing mines, bomb-dropping claws, K.G. Beast, Deadshot, and even the Joker himself. A spry hero, Batman can kneel and pull off three types of jumps: normal, Batman, and wall. One of the better looking and playing movie-based titles of the era, the game spawned a sequel in *Batman Return of the Joker*, which boasts an original storyline.

Batman Return of the Joker

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Batman Return of the Joker pits the Caped Crusader against the Clown Prince of Crime and his henchmen. Using a basic shooting mechanism, a jetpack, four types of extremely cool projectile weapons (cross bow, Batarang, sonic neutralizer, and shield star), and the ability to jump (over obstacles and on moving platforms), slide-attack, and duck, Batman must battle his way through seven challenging, hugely enjoyable stages: Gotham City Cathedral, The Joker's Warehouse, Snow Mountain, Refinery, Underground Conduit, Ammunition Base, and Island of Ha-Ha-cienda. The visuals, which feature parallax scrolling, rich coloring, detailed backgrounds, and large characters, are a pitch-perfect complement to the exemplary gameplay. Also released for the Game Boy.

Batman Returns

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1993.

The NES take on Tim Burton's *Batman Returns* (1992) is a brawler in the mold of games like *Double Dragon* and *Streets of Rage*, but is much more redundant. Players control the Dark Knight Detective as he punches and kicks his way through six stages (including Gotham Plaza and Arctic World) of sword swallows, clowns, skull riders, and other enemies, including Catwoman and Penguin (who starred in the film). Like the SNES version of the game, this one lets players commandeer the Batmobile, which shoots discs and bullets. As in *Final Fight*, one of the more powerful combat moves (in this case a spinning cape attack) takes health away from the player, leading to inevitable frustration. Also released for the Genesis, Game Gear, Atari Lynx, and Sega CD.

Battle Chess

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Board Game, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on the 1988 computer game, *Battle Chess* for the NES is a playable chess simulator (the computer A.I. is certainly formidable), but the animations move much slower than their PC counterparts, making the battle scenarios a chore to watch. Luckily, there is a standard 2D mode of play with ordinary chess pieces and no animations. In 3D mode (pseudo-3D, actually), the chess pieces appear primarily in human form (the knight has no horse, for example) and come to life when moved. During a capture, the scene switches to a computer-directed battle set against a castle background. Features include: take back (undo your last move); replay (replay your last move); suggest move (get hints from the computer); and five difficulty levels. Also released for the 3DO.

The Battle of Olympus

PUBLISHER: Broderbund. DEVELOPER: Infinity.
Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

Sporting a side-view perspective, *The Battle of Olympus* plays a lot like *Zelda II: The Ad-*

venture of Link, but is set in ancient Greece. Players guide Orpheus on a mythological quest to rescue his beloved Helene, whose soul has been stolen by Hades. Armed with a club and the ability to acquire a sword, a staff (unleashes the fire of Prometheus), a crystal ball, a harp (enables players to fly on the wings of Pegasus), the sandals of Hermes (for jumping higher), and other weapons, Orpheus must battle his way through labyrinthine woods, ruins, villages, valleys, mountains, swamps, and caves. Each of the game's eight levels is home to a gift-bearing god or goddess, such as Zeus or Athena. Enemies in this challenging, lavishly illustrated game include cyclopean beasts, centaurs, minotaurs, serpents, rock giants, and other fantastical creatures. Includes battery backup.

Battleship

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Mindscape. Board Game, 1 player. 1993.

Although it lacks a two-player mode, *Battleship* for the NES is a nice take on Milton Bradley's classic board game, in which gamers take turns bombing the other player's ships. As with the board game, players have numerous standard missiles, but the video game adds a limited supply of 10 different special weapons (warheads, torpedoes, depth charges, and the like), each of which covers more ground than a standard missile (which hits just one square on the 12x8 grid). In addition, the NES cartridge includes a new type of ship: a frigate. The game is over when the player (or the computer) has lost all of his or her ships, or when the player has progressed through 40 battles. *Battleship* does lack certain features found in *Super Battleship* (SNES, Genesis), such as the ability to repair ships and advance the fleet. Also released for the Game Boy, Game Boy Color, Game Gear, Philips CD-i, and PlayStation.

Battletank

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. First-Person Tank Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Designed by Garry Kitchen (of Activision fame), *Battletank* expands upon the inside-the-

tank perspective of such classics as *Battlezone* and *Robot Tank*. The tank players commandeer can steer right and left, speed up and slow down, reverse direction, raise and lower cannon and weapon sight, and fire 150mm shells, wire-guided shells (which lock onto fast-moving enemies at long range), smoke screens, and 50 caliber machine guns. The game has 10 missions (taking place through mountains, deserts, icy fields, and other areas), each involving such maneuvers as avoiding mines, shooting enemy tanks and helicopters, and destroying enemy strongholds (including a train yard, a refinery, and a nuclear power plant). Players will also visit NATO headquarters (for repairs, refueling, and rearming), study a satellite radar map, and monitor the tank's readouts, which include damage warning lights, short range radar, compass, number of enemies remaining, and more. Followed by: *Super Battletank* (Game Boy, Game Gear), *Super Battletank 2* (SNES), and *Super Battletank: War in the Gulf* (Genesis, SNES).

Battletoads

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

The titular toads in this nicely designed, graphically rich game must punch, slam, and kick their way through a bevy of rodents, ravens, pigs, mutants, innovative bosses, and other baddies, jumping over or otherwise avoiding chasms, whirlpools, logs, mines, missiles, meteorites, and other obstacles along the way. The variety-filled, super challenging action incorporates ropes (for rappelling), weaponry, humorous animations, and much more. There are even vehicles to ride, including a speed bike, a jet turbo, and a space board. Gamers can play as one of three oversized, anthropomorphic toads: Zitz, Rash, or Pimple. *Battletoads* spawned a number of sequels, including *Battletoads in Battlemaniacs* (SNES), *Battletoads in Ragnarok's World* (Game Boy), and a 1994 arcade game. Also released for the Genesis, Game Boy, and Game Gear.

Battletoads/Double Dragon — The Ultimate Team

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

A worthy sequel to *Battletoads*, *Battletoads/Double Dragon* is a dream team matchup of Zitz, Rash, and Pimple (the Battletoads) with twins Billy and Jimmy Lee (the Double Dragons). The gameplay and humor evoke *Battletoads* (as opposed to *Double Dragon*), with our heroes battling bad guys (the combined armies of the Dark Queen and the Shadow Boss) across the top of the massive Colossus space ship, in the bowels of said ship, and atop a missile headed straight for Earth. Each character can pull off a variety of punches, kicks, throws, and other fighting maneuvers, and busting up an enemy walker lets players use that walker's leg as a weapon. There's also a speeder bike to ride and a turbo rope for swinging across or down chasms. Obstacles to avoid include sparkbolts, electro barriers, mines, homing missiles, machine guns, astro boulders, and more. The ability for the Toads and Dragons to hit each other can be turned off or on, the latter inducing chuckle-worthy competition. Also released for the Genesis, SNES, and Game Boy.

Bee 52

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters Software. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

In *Bee 52*, players maneuver the titular bee as it collects nectar to keep Really Nice Honey from going out of business. After visiting three flowers, the bee must return to the hive, where the nectar turns into honey and goes into a pot, thus completing one of 24 stages. Slugs, grasshoppers, grubs, and other enemies make Bee 52's job a challenge, but the brave bee can fend them off with a stinger and a spit attack and can pick up such weapons as bombs, rapid reload, a junior bee, and a super stung. Beautiful outdoor environments and unusual gameplay make *Bee 52* a keeper. Unlicensed.

Beetlejuice

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Platform/Overhead View Action, 1 player. 1991.

A misstep by the usually reliable Rare (though a poor game by LJN is certainly no rarity), *Beetlejuice* is loosely based on Tim Burton's 1988 feature film, but looks more like the animated series (1989–1991). Players guide “the ghost with the most” as he runs, jumps, and stomps his way through The Village, Storm Drains, The Maitlands' House (which includes basement, kitchen, living rooms, attic, and model graveyard), The Attic, and Afterlife Waiting Room. By stomping on beetles, collecting poison bottles, and destroying ghosts, whirling skulls, and other enemies, *Beetlejuice* can collect “help vouchers” for use in purchasing “scares,” such as Medusa heads for freezing floating skulls, a Birdman for jumping high, and umbrella heads for defeating the octopus. Fans of the film may want this cartridge, but blind jumps, lousy controls, commonplace enemies that are impervious to certain attacks, and other examples of poor programming will alienate most gamers. Also released for the Game Boy.

Best of the Best Championship Karate

PUBLISHER: Electro Brain. DEVELOPER: Loricel. Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Loosely based on the 1989 feature film (which was simply called *Best of the Best*), *Best of the Best Championship Karate* features 32 different types of hits and kicks, eight of which the character the player creates or selects will have at his command. The action moves slowly, but is strategic in nature as a mix of moves works better than mere button-mashing. In addition, striking good blows depends on a number of factors, including the power of the blow, the proximity of the fighters, and the part of the body that was hit. Fighters are ranked according to strength, reflexes, and resistance and can improve these stats by training. The odd color scheme consists of blue lighting, purple onlookers, and a green ring. The SNES and Genesis versions of the game add a referee and crowd noise.

Bible Adventures

PUBLISHER: Wisdom Tree. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

The first religion-themed console game, *Bible Adventures* lets players “experience the

excitement of three stories from the Old Testament.” These include: Noah's Ark (carry animals to the boat); Baby Moses (keep the little prophet from harm); and David and Goliath (gather sheep and battle a giant). Each segment plays like a (very) poor man's *Super Mario Bros.* 2. Gameplay consists of running, jumping, climbing, delivering items, picking up and throwing objects, and avoiding scorpions, lions, and other enemies. Bible verses appear throughout each game. Unlicensed.

Bible Buffet

PUBLISHER: Wisdom Tree. DEVELOPER: Wisdom Tree. Board Game/Maze Shooter, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1993.

Packaged with a rather sizable trivia book, *Bible Buffet* is a video board game in which each player spins a spinner, moves around a map screen, and, depending on the square landed upon, spins again, answers three questions (from the aforementioned book), moves ahead or back extra spaces, or enters a brief overhead view maze/action scene. The latter has players using spoons, knives, forks, and preservatives to battle and collect various foods. The objective in this game is to finish first, collect the most food, and/or correctly answer the most questions. Unlicensed.

Bigfoot

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Monster Truck Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Bigfoot is a cross-country tour from L.A. to New York, viewed from a top-down perspective. Players drive their monster truck up the screen, jumping (ala *Bump 'n' Jump*), crushing other vehicles, avoiding water slicks, grinding through mud hills, collecting cash (for purchasing tires, a bigger engine, transmission work, and an upgraded suspension), and grabbing power-ups (including a circular saw, shields, and nitro boosts). At stops along the route, the action switches to a thumb-numbing side-view event: Car Crush, Mud Race, Hill Climb, Tractor Pull, Car Crush Drag Race, or Oyster Bay Championship Drag Race.

Bignose Freaks Out

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Optimus Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

The sequel to *Bignose the Caveman*, *Bignose Freaks Out* is a faster game than its progenitor, thanks to a new mode of transportation: a wheel board, which speeds Bignose through each level like a Sonic the Hedgehog wannabe (by way of *BC's Quest for Tires* for the ColecoVision). On a mission to recover stolen bones scattered throughout five prehistoric levels filled with hills, trees, caves, slopes, chasms, and platforms, Bignose must use his trusty club and rocks to battle dinosaurs and other enemies, some of which pop up unexpectedly, leading to cheap hits. Level warps, boss battles, and hidden areas and treasures complement the action nicely. Unlicensed.

Bignose Freaks Out (Aladdin Version)

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Optimus Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

The Aladdin rendition of *Bignose Freaks Out* looks and plays like the standard version, but was produced in a compact cartridge format. Requires the Aladdin Deck Enhancer. Unlicensed.

Bignose the Caveman

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

In this fun, but minor platformer, a short, big-nosed caveman (hence the title) runs and jumps across the gaps and onto the platforms (cliffs, clouds, tree branches, and the like) of four prehistoric island worlds: Paradise, Monster, Terror, and Chaos. Armed with a club, the caveman must fend off pterodactyls, triceratops, spiders, sea serpents, turtles (who sometimes act as stepping stones), cobras, and other enemies. Eating grapes levels-up Bignose so he can fire projectiles, making his job easier. Collecting bones gives Bignose currency for use in purchasing spells. Certain areas feature forced scrolling while others find Bignose using his club like a propeller. An Aladdin Deck Enhancer

version was advertised, but not released. Followed by: *Bignose Freaks Out* (NES). Unlicensed.

Bill & Ted's Excellent Video Game Adventure

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Rocket Science Games. Overhead View Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

An extension of the movie *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989), this game lets players control Bill or Ted (depending on the level) as they travel back in time to rescue Cleopatra, Al Capone, Elvis, Sitting Bull, and 12 other historical figures. Friends throughout the game provide clues and items while foes (including "crazy jailer dudes") can be distracted or eliminated with such items as text books, dynamite, pudding, and cassette tapes. Worlds to explore include Medieval, Western, Colonial, Medieval 2, Modern, and Ancient. The action is viewed from an isometric perspective, helping make the characters somewhat difficult to control. Bill and Ted are also featured in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (Atari Lynx) and *Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure* (Game Boy).

Bill Elliot's NASCAR Challenge

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Distinctive Software. Stock Car Racing, 1 player. 1991.

Viewed from inside the cockpit of the car (the bottom 2/5 of the screen shows the steering wheel and instrument panel), *Bill Elliot's NASCAR Challenge* lets players select from three cars (Pontiac Grand Prix, Ford Thunderbird, and Chevrolet Lumina) for racing on two types of tracks: high banked ovals (Daytona and Talladega) and challenging road courses (Sears Point and Watkins Glen). Prior to hitting the pavement, players can customize their vehicle in terms of tires, gear ratio, spoiler angle, transmission (automatic or manual), and engine (racing or qualifying). During races, which are against 15 other drivers, the backgrounds are simplistic and players can only see a short distance ahead. However, numerous strategic considerations, including pitting, following a good line, and drafting (positioning the car in

the vacuum behind the leader) provide players with a relatively authentic racing experience. Co-designed by Elliot himself.

Bionic Commando

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Platform Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

In *Bionic Commando*, the protagonist cannot jump, making for some unusual (if enjoyable) platforming action. The titular soldier uses an extendable bionic arm, which can grab onto surfaces to swing or pull him forward. Unlike the arcade original (Capcom, 1987), the NES version features: vertical scrolling stages; permits necessary for entering certain areas; and a stage selection map. Armed with a normal gun, the soldier can add a wide gun, a rocket gun, a three-way gun, a machine gun, and a hyper bazooka to his arsenal. Enemies to shoot include suicide bombers, helicopters, gunners, laser cannons, jeeps, giant soldiers, and more. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *Bionic Commando: Elite Forces* (Game Boy Color), *Bionic Commando Rearmed* (PS3, Xbox 360), and *Bionic Commando* (PS3, Xbox 360).

The Black Bass

PUBLISHER: Hot-B. DEVELOPER: Hot-B. Sports/Fishing, 1 player. 1989.

The first realistic fishing video game, *The Black Bass* lets armchair anglers catch black bass, brown trout, rainbow trout, and pike, but only bass increase the player's score. There are four lakes (Lake Amada, Japan Lake, Lake More, and San Lake) and five types of lures: pencil bait, frogs, shallow runners, spinners, and plastic worms. Players can change the color of the lure (according to weather conditions), choose a fishing spot, move the fishing pole from side to side, and let out and reel in the line. *The Black Bass* is

slow and hopelessly dated, but remains historically important. Followed by: *The Blue Marlin* (NES), *Super Black Bass* (SNES), *Bassin's Black Bass* (SNES), *Black Bass: Lure Fishing* (Game Boy, Game Boy Color), *Black Bass with Blue Marlin* (PlayStation), and *Super Black Bass Fishing* (Nintendo DS).

Blackjack

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment.
DEVELOPER: Odyssey Software. Gambling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Unlike *Las Vegas Poker & Blackjack* (Intellivision) and *Ken Uston Blackjack/Poker* (ColecoVision), both of which are from the previous generation of consoles, and both of which depict a nicely drawn and animated dealer, *Blackjack* for the NES has decidedly simplistic visuals, offering little more than white text, a hand cursor, a solid green background, and five different card designs. In addition, there is no poker option. Fortunately, however, the game does feature a nicely programmed version of "21," letting players double down,



Commando and *Bionic Commando*, both published by Capcom, a third-party company. As with Konami and Rare, most Capcom games for the NES are high in quality.

split pairs, make insurance bets, and draw five card charlies. The cards are dealt from a “dealing shoe,” which consists of one, three, or five decks of cards. Unlicensed.

Blades of Steel

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Sports/Hockey, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1988.

One of the best, most exciting sports games of the 1980s, *Blades of Steel* is fast paced, six-on-six action, featuring smooth skating, quick, crisp passing, and furious shots on goal. There are face-offs, icing penalties, slashing, and checking, but if play gets too rough, a fight will break out. This switches the game to battle mode, which is a one-on-one, side-view slugfest that adds substantial enjoyment to an already fun game. Like its arcade counterpart (Konami, 1987), *Blades of Steel* for the NES helped usher in a new era of realism in sports video games. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *NHL Blades of Steel* (Game Boy Color), *NHL Blades of Steel '99* (Nintendo 64, PlayStation), and *NHL Blades of Steel 2000* (Game Boy Color, Nintendo 64, PlayStation).

Blastar Master

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Blastar Master has players piloting the S.O.P.H.I.A., a tank-like vehicle that travels underground through maze-like passages, using missiles and other weapons to destroy mutants. After killing the boss of each level, players will acquire such items as Hyper, which crushes walls, Hover, which enables the vehicle to reach higher areas, and Dive, which allows for free swimming under water. Players can jump out of the vehicle to climb ladders, enter doorways, throw grenades, and more. Non-linear gameplay, richly textured graphics (which include lots of greens and browns), and unusual gameplay make *Blastar Master* worth looking into. Followed by: *Blastar Master Boy* (Game Boy), *Blastar Master 2* (Genesis), *Blastar Master: Enemy Below* (Game Boy Color), and *Blastar Master: Blasting Again* (PlayStation).

The Blue Marlin

PUBLISHER: Hot-B. DEVELOPER: Hot-B.
Sports/Fishing, 1 player. 1992.

The first of several sequels to *The Black Bass*, *The Blue Marlin* improves upon its predecessor with more detailed graphics, a wider variety of fish (including marlin, sailfish, sharks, tuna, swordfish, dorado, and barracuda), the ability to navigate a boat (as opposed to simply selecting a fishing spot), and more. During the reeling in of fish, the game offers intense battles and even some multiple choice questions. Relative to the limitations of the medium, the simulation of deep-sea fishing in Florida and Hawaii is fairly accurate.

The Blues Brothers

PUBLISHER: Titus Software. DEVELOPER: Titus Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

The Blues Brothers is little more than a mundane platformer, besmirching the name of the raucous, rousing good comedy (1980) on which it is based. Jake or Elwood (or both in two-player mode) must run, jump (over gaps and onto moving platforms), crawl, and climb (stairs and ladders) their way through five chapters: Stairway to Heaven, Wear-House, Jailhouse Rock, Underworld, and Demolition Experts, each filled with such enemies as snakes, blobs, sharks (swimming does come into play), spiders, evil cops, and/or mad dogs. The musically inclined (at least in the movie) heroes can kick eggs at enemies and ride a dog and a snake, and springs allow for heightened hops, but most of the action consists of simple avoidance, which quickly gets old. Endlessly looping versions of the “Peter Gunn Theme,” “Everybody Needs Somebody To Love,” and other tunes is the supposed “strength” of the game. Also released for the Game Boy. Much different than the more adventurous SNES version. Followed by: *Blues Brothers 2000* (Nintendo 64).

Bo Jackson Baseball

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Two-sport superstar Bo Jackson may have been a fine athlete, but the NES game bearing his name is a real clunker. The action begins with an instrumental rendition of the National Anthem (“sung” by a rather attractive lady), but goes down hill from there. The player’s pitcher is invisible (represented by an arrow), and the batter and pitcher are too close together. The batter can’t move inside the batter’s box, and pitching and swing selection, which employs an onscreen menu, is awkward to use. Voice effects are included, but they get old pretty quickly. Bo also starred in *Bo Jackson: Hit and Run!* (Game Boy), which features baseball and football.

Bomberman

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Maze, 1 player. 1989.

Bomberman is a simplistic, though fun and addictive little game, in which players plant bombs, run away, then plant more bombs. The mazes consist of concrete panels and brick walls, the latter of which may reveal one of the following power-ups when destroyed: increased bomb blast radius, the ability to detonate bombs via remote control, and increased running speed. Prior to exiting each level, Bomberman must walk around destroying a bunch of goofy little smiley faced characters, avoiding their firepower in the process. *Bomberman* inspired lots of sequels, most of which increased the entertainment value considerably with the inclusion of multi-player action. Also released for the TurboGrafx-16 and various other systems.

Bomberman II

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Maze, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1993.

As the title indicates, *Bomberman II* is the second game in the *Bomberman* series. The basic action remains essentially the same: guide an odd looking little fellow around more than 50 mazes delineated by concrete panels, brick walls, and other small squares, setting bombs to blow up pursuing creatures and the brick walls. However, the ante has been upped tremendously with the inclusion of multi-player action (VS

Mode and Battle Mode), a feature that would become a staple of the popular series. Blowing up a brick wall may reveal the exit to the next level, or it may uncover a power-up item, such as a remote control detonator, Bomberman symbol (hidden bonus round), flame face (bomb blast extender), wall pass (walk through walls), skate (walk faster), or vest (fireproof against your own blast). Multi-tap adaptor required for three-player action. Followed by: *Bomberman '93* (TurboGrafx-16), *Super Bomberman* (SNES), *Mega Bomberman* (Genesis), *Bomberman: Act Zero* (Xbox 360), and numerous other sequels.

Bonk's Adventure

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1994.

Though sporting fewer levels and fewer colors than its more popular, better sounding TurboGrafx-16 progenitor (which gave that console a mascot), *Bonk's Adventure* for the NES nevertheless retains a high degree of playability and cartoonish humor. Gamers guide the titular big-headed cave boy as he runs, jumps, swims, and climbs (using a special wall-biting technique) his way through perilous Dinosaur Land (including inside a dinosaur itself), collecting smiling faces and searching for the beautiful Moon Princess. To battle the many beasts he will come across (including huge bosses), Bonk does a midair spin and “bonks” them with his huge, indestructible head. Power-ups are obtained by bonking Bani Bani flowers, which provide higher jumps, extra energy, and pieces of meat, the latter giving Bonk the ability to simply run over enemies. Flowers can also transport Bonk to special bonus zones that test the cave boy’s jumping, spinning, climbing, and swimming skills. Also released for the Game Boy and arcade. Sequels include: *Bonk's Revenge* (TurboGrafx-16, Game Boy) and *Bonk 3: Bonk's Big Adventure* (TurboGrafx-16, TurboDuo).

Boulder Dash

PUBLISHER: JVC. DEVELOPER: Data East. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

First released in 1984 as a computer, arcade, and ColecoVision game, *Boulder Dash* was up-

dated by Data East in 1990 for the arcades and the NES. Players control Rockford as he tunnels underground, collecting the required number of diamonds to make exit doors appear. Dropping a rock on an enemy makes it explode, breaking objects and obstacles around it. Rocks can also be used to block objects, such as amoebas, which turn into diamonds when surrounded. *Boulder Dash* is similar to *Dig Dug*, but is more strategically complex. Highly recommended. Includes password feature. Also released for the Atari 5200. Followed by: *Boulder Dash II: Rockford's Revenge* (Atari 5200) and *Boulder Dash EX* (Game Boy Advance).

A Boy and His Blob: Trouble on Blobolonia

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Adventure Puzzle/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Developed by David “Pitfall!” Crane, *A Boy and His Blob* shares some things in common with *Pitfall!* (including a side-view perspective and caverns to navigate), but it features a highly original component: that of an alien blob following players as they run around collecting treasure, climbing stairs, shooting vitamins at enemies (including sub-way serpents, popcorn, and magic marshmallows), and dodging falling rocks, stalactites, chocolate kisses, and other obstacles. The blob is the key to success, since feeding him jelly beans turns him into various helpful shapes, such as a ladder, a bridge, a rocket, a hole, or a blow torch. There are 14 jellybean flavors, each with a different effect on the blob. The action can get tedious, but it’s nice that the game requires players to think their way through each area.

Bram Stoker's Dracula

PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Probe Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Francis Ford Coppola’s opulent 1992 film comes to playable life on the NES. Gamers guide Jonathan Harker through Castle Dracula, Hillingham Estate Mansion, Carfax Abbey Crypt, and other creepy locales, battling and

trying to get past such enemies and obstacles as skeletons, ghosts, zombies, spike pits, floating platforms, and Dracula himself (including his shadow, bat, and wolf beast forms). Harker begins the game with a hacking/slashing weapon, but can pick up rocks, triple rocks, axes, and enemy-burning torches. Like *Castlemania*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is superior to *Friday the 13th*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and most other horror-themed NES games. Also released for the Genesis, SNES, Game Boy, and Game Gear. The Sega CD version is much different.

Break Time The National Pool Tour

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon/Opera House. Sports/Billiards, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

In *The National Pool Tour*, players maneuver a cursor around the table to line up their shot. Then, using a moving cue and a meter, players select the power of the shot. The table is viewed from overhead while the moving cue and meter appear in windows along the bottom 1/3rd of the screen (the table takes up the top part of the screen). There are four opponents of varying difficulty and six modes of play: Nine Ball, Rotation, Eight Ball, 14–1 Rack Game, The National Pool Tour, and Practice. Voice effects and overbearing music supplement the action.

BreakThru

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Not to be confused with *BreakThru!* for the Super NES, which is a *Tetris*-inspired puzzler, *BreakThru* for the NES is a solid port of Data East’s 1986 arcade shooter. Players drive an assault vehicle from left to right, speeding up and slowing down (the rate of speed determines the distance of the jump) to avoid or jump over landmines, rocks, missiles, destroyed bridges, and other obstacles. There are also enemies to shoot, including infantrymen, armored buggies, armored cars, jeeps, fire mobiles, trucks, tanks, and helicopters. Grabbing power barrels, which come down from the sky, gives players three-way fire and extra lives. The

mission of the game, which takes place through fortified mountains, bridges, prairies, cities, and airfields, is to retrieve a secret fighter plane. The action is fast, and precision jumping is a must, but unlimited continues make the game beatable. Somewhat similar to: *Moon Patrol*.

Bubble Bath Babes

PUBLISHER: Panesian. DEVELOPER: Panesian.
Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1991.

Easily the best of the three adult NES games produced by Panesian (*Peek-A-Boo Poker* and *Hot Slots* are the others), *Bubble Bath Babes* is a challenging puzzler in which moveable groupings of four bubbles rise from the bottom of the playfield into formations up above. When four or more bubbles of the same color touch, they will burst, which is what the player wants. Spelling out magic (letters appear in certain bubbles) is a helpful strategy, and randomly appearing transforming bubbles turn surrounding bubbles into the same color. Level progression treats players to pictures of seductively dressed (or undressed) women, and a two-player split-screen mode provides some nice competition. Unlicensed and very hard to find. See also: *Mermaids of Atlantis* (NES).

Bubble Bobble

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

A stellar rendition of Taito's oft-ported 1986 arcade game, *Bubble Bobble* for the NES has players guiding a pair of running, jumping dinosaurs (who look like cartoon dragons) named Bub and Bob around a series of non-scrolling, platform-heavy levels, blowing bubbles to trap beasties with such names as Willy Whistle, Baron Von Blubba, and Grumple Grommit. To remove the beasties from the playfield (which is the objective in each screen), players should burst the bubbles trapping the beasties. Bursting several enemy-holding bubbles in concession grants extra points. Grabbing candy, crosses, parasols, shoes, bombs, and other items gives players extra abilities, such as speed, faster and farther bubbles, weap-

onry (bombs, fire, thunder bubbles, earthquakes, lightning, water), and temporary invincibility. Players can ride bubbles as well. There are two worlds, each containing 113 screens. Includes password feature. Numerous sequels followed.

Bubble Bobble Part 2

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

Much different than the vertically scrolling *Rainbow Islands*, which was the arcade sequel to *Bubble Bobble*, *Bubble Bobble Part 2* for the NES plays a lot like *Bubble Bobble*, but adds: background graphics (clouds, trees, and the like); clocks (to freeze enemies); pencils (to continue the game); bottles of wind (to create wind bubbles); and basketball and volleyball mini-games. In addition, the dinosaurs can now float (by inflating), jump extra high (while on top of a bubble), and blow super bubbles (which can entrap several enemies at once). Released late in the life of the NES, *Bubble Bobble Part 2* was an under-produced title, making it hard to find (and very expensive) in today's collector's market. Also released for the Game Boy. See also: *Rainbow Islands* (NES).

Bucky O'Hare

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the animated series, *Bucky O'Hare and the Toad Wars*, *Bucky O'Hare* for the NES lets players guide the titular comic book hero through eight challenging levels (four color-coded planets and inside a Magma Tanker), rescuing his friends (AFC Blink, Deadeye Duck, Jenny, and Willy DuWitt) and battling members of the fiendish Toad Empire (including Storm Toad Jet Trooper, Crater Centipede, and Robosnake). Once rescued, a friend becomes a playable character. Each friend has a different weapon and/or ability, such as a three-way pulse gun, bombs (for destroying walls and ice), flying, or clinging to walls. Gameplay evokes *Mega Man*, but *Bucky O'Hare* offers more variety. Excellent platforming and shooting action, gorgeous visuals (including layered

scrolling and colorful animation), and robust sound effects and music cement the deal. Konami released an arcade version the same year, but it's a side-scrolling combat game.

The Bugs Bunny Birthday Blowout

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

To celebrate Bugs Bunny's 50th birthday, Warner Bros. has planned a special celebration, prompting Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, and other jealous Loony Tunes to plant various obstacles (shooting comets, poisonous frogs, exploding alarm clocks, tarantulas, and more) between Bugs and his party destination. To make it past the animated foes and their fiendish contraptions, Bugs, who can run, jump, climb, and gather carrots (which allow him to play Bonus Bingo), is outfitted with a large mallet. Levels include Gentle Grassland, Deadly Desert, Mighty Mountain, Creepy Cave, Freaky Forest, and Haunted House. *The Bugs Bunny Birthday Blowout* is a solid platformer that fans of the franchise will enjoy.

The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Side-Scrolling Platform/Vertical Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

Despite the fact that he's a rabbit, Bugs Bunny can't jump in *Crazy Castle*, making for a rather limited game. The Wascal Wabbit's objective is to rescue Honey Bunny, which requires maneuvering through 60 relatively unadorned levels of play, climbing stairs, entering doorways and pipes, gathering carrots, and avoiding Daffy Duck, Sylvester, Wiley Coyote, and Yosemite Sam. Bugs can drink magic carrot juice for invisibility, pick up boxing gloves for punching, and drop safes, crates, buckets, and weights on the bad guys. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle 2* (Game Boy), *Bugs Bunny in Crazy Castle 3* (Game Boy Color), and *Bugs Bunny in Crazy Castle 4* (Game Boy Color).

Bump 'n' Jump

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1988.

Similar in some respects to *Spy Hunter*, *Bump 'n' Jump* is viewed from overhead, with players racing up roadways (in this case city, country yard, mountain, and seaside roadways). However, instead of shooting other cars, players bump them into obstacles or jump on top of them. Players must also jump over water, buildings, and other road hazards (flashing exclamation points warn of such dangers). Enemy vehicles to crush or avoid include patrol cars, ambulances, jeeps, buggies, trucks (which deposit sand on the road), fuel trucks (which dump oil), cement mixers (which emit concrete), and more. The game is a nice port of the 1982 Bally/Midway coin-op classic, going so far as to add an extra component: power barrels to pick up for fuel and energy. Jumping is only allowable when the car has reached 150 km/hour, but the "Jump Ok!" text alert from the arcade game is missing. Also released for the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and ColecoVision.

Burai Fighter

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: KID Corp. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Burai Fighter features seven levels, two of which are viewed from a top-down perspective and require that the player locate and destroy a base, meaning it's easy to get lost (despite the inclusion of a radar display). Instead of a ship, this game features a man wearing a proton pack. He begins with a simple eight-way gun, but can grab three different weapons—laser, missile, and ring—each of which has three power levels. Additional pick-ups include speed, cobalt bombs, and rotating pods (ala *R-Type*). Enemies include Giganticrab, Jawsipede, and other robo-mutants. Three difficulty levels are available.

BurgerTime

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Though missing a few flourishes from the introductory sequence (including character names and pictures), *BurgerTime* for the NES is a finely programmed port of Bally/Midway's 1982 arcade game. Players guide Chef Peter

Pepper as he climbs ladders and walks across giant burger parts, including buns, lettuce, patties, cheese, and tomatoes. The parts, which are lined up in vertical rows on several levels of platforms, fall when walked over, and the ultimate goal is to get all the parts stacked onto plates positioned below. While Peter Pepper builds burgers, Mr. Hot Dog, Mr. Pickle, and Mr. Egg will pursue him, and they can be squashed by burger parts or stunned with pepper, the latter of which is replenished by picking up French fries, coffee, and ice cream cones. As in the arcade game, there are six different screens. Getting trapped while out of pepper is frustrating, but *BurgerTime* remains a timeless classic. Also released for the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and ColecoVision. Followed by: *BurgerTime Deluxe* (Game Boy) and *The Flintstones: BurgerTime in Bedrock* (Game Boy Color).

Cabal

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare. Third-Person Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on the 1988 Fabtek arcade game, which offered sharper graphics and trackball control (on certain cabinets), *Cabal* has players viewing a soldier from behind as he maneuvers right and left (including jumping, ducking, and rolling), firing an assault rifle, a machine gun, and a grenade launcher at battle tanks, choppers, sharpshooters, and other enemies. There are five areas to battle through, including an old village, the beach, naval headquarters, the jungle, and the mountains. The awkward control system uses a single button to fire bullets and release grenades (holding the A button fires bullets while tapping the A button launches grenades), and the control pad to simultaneously guide the soldier and the crosshair.

Caesar's Palace

PUBLISHER: Virgin Games. DEVELOPER: Real-time Associates. Gambling, 1 player. 1992.

Caesar's Palace for the NES lets players blow virtual cash on five different types of Las Vegas-style games: Roulette, Slot Machines (two three-reel machines and one four-reel),

Video Poker, Blackjack, and The Big Six Money Wheel, the latter of which is also known as Wheel of Fortune (perhaps explaining the Vanna White look-alike pictured on the box). Naturally, the game is not as sophisticated as *Super Caesar's Palace* for the Super NES (which lets gamers walk around the casino playing such games as Scratcher, Keno, and Red Dog), but it is a nice, playable collection of gambling simulators. Also released for the Genesis, Game Gear, and Game Boy. Followed by various sequels, including *Caesar's Palace II* for the Game Boy Color.

California Games

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare. Sports/Extreme, 1-8 players (alternating). 1989.

Like the original computer release (Epyx, 1987), which broke ground for extreme sports video games, *California Games* for the NES includes six events: Half Pipe Skateboarding (side-view, perform stunts while riding back and forth on ramp); BMX Bike Racing (side-view, perform jumps, wheelies, flips, 360s, table tops); Surfing (ride wave, catch air, perform 360s); Roller Skating (skate boardwalk, jump, avoid obstacles); Flying Disk (throw Frisbee back-and-forth); and Foot Bag (a.k.a. hacky sack). After every event, trophies are awarded to the top finishers. A practice mode is available. Also released for the Atari 2600 (impressive for the system, but minus Flying Disk and Roller Skating), Master System, and Genesis. Predictably, the Genesis version has the best visuals. Followed by: *California Games II* (SNES).

Capcom's Gold Medal Challenge '92

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Sports/Olympics, 1-8 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1992.

Capcom's Gold Medal Challenge '92 features high production values (detailed stadiums, nice character graphics, medal ceremonies) and an impressive 18 events: 100 Meter Dash, 100 Meter Relay, 200 Meter Dash, 400 Meter Dash, 110 Meter Hurdles, Marathon, Long Jump, Javelin Throw, Triple Jump, Shot Put, High Jump, Weightlifting, Vaulting Horse,

100 Meter Backstroke, 100 Meter Breast, 100 Meter Butterfly, 100 Meter Freestyle, and 200 Meter Medley. Fast button-pressing is crucial in certain events, but subtle methods (such as pacing and rhythm) are oftentimes more important, separating the game a bit from such previous titles as *Track & Field* and *The Activision Decathlon*. Modes of play include Training and World Tournament. Includes battery backup.

Captain America and the Avengers

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Platform Shooter/Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Unlike the Genesis, Game Gear, and SNES games of the same name, *Captain America and the Avengers* for the NES is *not* based on the 1991 Data East arcade classic. Rather, it's an original (if repetitious) creation in which players, as either Captain America or Hawkeye (depending on the stage and on the character selected), must battle bad guys (including Wizard, Mandarin, Ultron, and Crossbones), jump on platforms and over obstacles, activate switches to turn off hazards, find the exit to each level, and rescue Iron Man and Vision from the Red Skull. Captain America throws his mighty shield while Hawkeye fires arrows. Both can punch, but Hawkeye is more fun to control since he can shoot while jumping. A special non-scrolling Battle Mode lets player one fight as Captain America or Hawkeye against player two, who can select from Crossbones, Ultron, and Wizard. The best, most evenly matched competition is Hawkeye vs. Ultron.

Captain Comic: The Adventure

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Adapted from the 1988 shareware PC game *The Adventures of Captain Comic*, *Captain Comic: The Adventure* is the best cartridge in Color Dreams' admittedly weak library of NES titles. On a quest to recover stolen treasure, Captain Comic must walk and jump through eight non-linear levels of planet Tambia (including Lake Siri and Haunted Castle), blasting

such oddly named creatures as Phlegmatism, Trimodel Ectosphere, and BirdBrother Skip. All the items from the PC game remain intact, including keys, boots (for jumping higher), transport wands, lanterns (for lighting caves), corkscrew bullets, and Blastola Cola (ammo). Unlicensed.

Captain Planet and the Planeteers

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Chris Gray Enterprises. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Based on the environmentally friendly 1990s cartoon series, *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* puts players in the role of the titular blue-skinned super-hero, who is the physical embodiment of the five Planeteers' ring powers: earth, wind, fire, water, and heart. During the first part of each of the game's five levels (the "outside" sections), players pilot a geo-cruiser, an eco-copter, or an eco-sub, using the aforementioned ring powers to shoot enemy ships, drop rocks to plug up oil refinery smokestacks, and more. During the second part of each level (the "inside" sections), Captain Planet flies around dodging pollution and punching robots. Freeing animals from traps also plays a role. Throughout the game, Captain Planet can grab a number of power-ups, including shields, faster shots, triple shots, and larger fire, rocks, and water, but the levels are tough to get through nevertheless.

Captain Skyhawk

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Captain Skyhawk is a solidly entertaining shooter that puts players in the cockpit of an F14VTS fighter, using a cannon, intercept missiles, air-to-ground missiles, and hawk bombs to fend off an alien invasion. Mission objectives include docking with space stations, dropping off supplies, picking up a scientist, destroying an alien space station, and, of course, destroying enemy planes. The viewpoint is from above the action (thanks to a spy satellite viewer), and the jet fighter, which flies over angular mountains and geometric landscapes, can climb up, dive down, and bank and barrel roll

left and right. Effective quasi-3D graphics and a nice variety of objectives make *Captain Skyhawk* a strong entry in the NES library.

Casino Kid

PUBLISHER: Sofel. DEVELOPER: Sofel. Gambling, 1 player. 1989.

In *Casino Kid*, players walk around the Las Vegas-style “Golden Crumbs” casino (viewed from overhead), hitting up other gamblers to play Blackjack or five-card draw Poker. Both games play pretty well (Blackjack includes doubling down, surrendering, and splitting the hand), but exploring the casino is tedious, thanks to many gamblers turning the player down (gamers must play the casino denizens in a set order). Also, the computer tends to display an unrealistic percentage of really good poker hands, and the player and the computer oftentimes have similar hands. After beating all the casino players, the Casino Kid is transported to a mansion — with dramatic music to match — where he must play Poker against King, a high stakes gambler who is hard to beat.

Casino Kid II

PUBLISHER: Sofel. DEVELOPER: Sofel. Gambling, 1 player. 1993.

Instead of wandering around a single casino as in the original game, *Casino Kid II* lets players travel to 10 different locations to take on the best gamblers in the world. The action is less tedious since players can take on any of the ethnically diverse gamblers in virtually any order. Poker and Blackjack return as playable games, but now there’s Roulette as well (interestingly, players are given hints where the ball will land, adding some strategy to the game). In addition, Poker hands seem more random, giving the game a more realistic feel. As in *Casino Kid*, the cards are shown in close-up, with contestants’ and dealers’ faces and remarks appearing in windows, but *Casino Kid II* has better graphics and sounds.

Castelian

PUBLISHER: Triffix Entertainment. DEVELOPER: BITS Development. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

Patterned after a late 1980s computer game called *Nebulus*, *Castelian* is an oddly compelling (at least until frustration sets in) adventure with an impressive rotational effect. Players guide a frog-like creature named Julius up eight different towers by entering doorways, jumping on platforms (some of which vanish), and going up stairs and elevators. When Julius (called Pogo in the computer version) moves right and left, he stays in the center of the screen, with the tower itself rotating to simulate movement. Making things difficult are lamely illustrated (if formidable) spheres and other enemies, some of which don’t die when shot. The game was released as *Tower Toppler* for the Atari 7800, but with a different storyline and different bonus rounds (*Tower Toppler* bonus rounds offer side-scrolling shooter action while *Castelian* has players hopping on clouds and gathering gems). Also released for the Game Boy.

Castle of Deceit

PUBLISHER: Bunch Games. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Hampered by sluggish controls, mediocre graphics, redundant music, and poorly programmed enemy A.I., *Castle of Deceit* has players guiding a running, jumping magician through themed, maze-like castles (Moons, Winds, Flame, and Poseidon), firing spheres of magical energy at dragons, wraiths, skulls, frogs, and other creatures. Players must also collect runes and find keys to enter doorways, and there is some backtracking within each of the game’s 10 levels. After making it through each castle, a behind-the-magician perspective boss battle ensues. Unlicensed.

Castle of Dragon

PUBLISHER: Seta. DEVELOPER: Athena. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

The evil Darklarza’s Dragon Cub has kidnapped the princess, and it is up to a brave warrior named Geraden to rescue her. As Geraden, players must walk through nicely rendered cas-

gles, forests, and caverns, mindlessly hacking and slashing ghost knights, bloodbats, sphinxes, zombies, cyclopean beasts, and other enemies. Geraden begins with a basic sword and an ordinary shield (when he ducks, his shield automatically rises), but he can acquire a throwing knife, a mace, a sonic sword, a lightning sword, armor, a crystal ball (prevents Darklarza's resurrection), a dragon scale shield, and a dragon slayer. There's not much platforming, but Geraden must jump across the occasional hazardous gap, which can be frustrating since players are only given one life. Based on the 1989 Seta arcade game, which offered a two-player simultaneous mode.



Six high profile NES games: *Contra*, *Ghosts 'n Goblins*, *Castlevania II*, *Castlevania III*, *Double Dragon*, and *Double Dragon II*, all of which are shown in their original packaging.

Castlequest

PUBLISHER: Nexoft. DEVELOPER: ASCII. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

In *Castlequest*, Prince Rafael must search 100 simplistic looking rooms (comprised largely of columns and brick walls and floors) to locate and rescue Princess Margarita, who has been captured by Mizer, the Dark Lord of Groken Castle. Each room has several color-coded doors. To open a door, Rafael must use a key of the same color. Keys are limited in number (there are no extras), so discretion is advised. In addition to opening doors, Rafael will pick up treasures, ride elevators, jump on flying blocks, avoid needles, use items (barrels, bricks, jars, candles, and lockers), battle enemies (knights, wizards, attack cats, fire spirits, bishops, and phantom flowers) with a short-range sword, and more. A map enables Rafael to track his location and avoid searching the same room twice, but tricky puzzles and awkward controls make the game a challenge. Similar to *Milon's Secret Castle* (NES), *Montezuma's Revenge* (Master System), and *The Heist* (ColecoVision).

Castlevania

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

One of the best games of the 8-bit era, *Castlevania* has players, as Simon Belmont, going up against none other than Count Dracula himself. Prior to that fateful encounter, Belmont must climb stairs, jump over obstacles and onto platforms, and face hordes of other monster movie-like creatures, including vampire bats, phantom bats, zombies, floating Medusa heads, skeletons, hunchbacks, knights, Frankenstein and Igor, and The Grim Reaper. Belmont is equipped with a fun-to-use magic whip and can grab the following weapons (carried one at a time) found in candles and bricks throughout the creepy,

seven-story castle: daggers, axes, fire bombs, boomerangs, crosses (for destroying every enemy onscreen), invisibility potions, and morning stars (for increasing the power of the whip). Hearts act as special weapons ammo while pork chops can be eaten to revive lost health. Atmospheric graphics and sounds match the game's awesome gameplay and inventive level design. Also released for the Game Boy Advance. Followed by numerous sequels, including *Castlevania: Bloodlines* (Genesis) and *Castlevania: Dracula X* (SNES).

Castlevania II: Simon's Quest

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player.
1988.

A radical departure from the original *Castlevania*, this sequel once again finds the whip-wielding Simon Belmont battling classic monsters (two-headed creatures, man-eating plants, spiders, skulls, The Wolf Man, The Mummy, and the like), but this time the gameplay has been infused with a number of adventure/RPG elements. These include: talking to villagers to garner clues; purchasing magic weapons (daggers, silver knives, oak stakes, chain whips, flame whips, and the like); and searching for (and destroying) Dracula's missing pieces (nail, eyeball, rib bone, ring, and heart). The non-linear action takes Belmont through six hauntingly beautiful levels: The Mansions, The Church, The Ferryman, The Forest Primevil, Bridge Over the River Die, and The Graveyard. Though the series would return to pure action with *Castlevania III* (a move most fans appreciated), *Castlevania II* was a precursor of sorts to the excellent *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (PlayStation). Includes password feature.

Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

One of the two or three best games in the entire series, *Castlevania III* takes place 100 years prior to *Castlevania*, putting players in the role of Trevor Belmont, a forefather of Simon. The game looks and sounds even better

than previous entries (check out the gorgeous stained glass windows and ivy growing up the castle walls in level one), and Trevor can transform into three different partner spirits: Alucard (Dracula's son, who can turn into a bat and fire a ball of destruction); Grant DaNasty (a pirate who can stick to walls and ceilings and wield an axe and a dagger); and Sypha Belnades (a mystic warlord who attacks with flames, frozen crystals, lightning bolts, and a staff). Trevor wields a whip and can find battle axes, boomerangs, daggers, and sacred water. The action evokes the original *Castlevania*, but with alternate pathways leading to four different endings. Levels include Haunted Ship of Fools, Sunken City of Poltergeists, Clock Tower of Untimely Death, and Curse Castle, among 13 others. Includes password feature. Followed by: *Super Castlevania IV* (SNES).

Caveman Games

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East.
Sports/Olympics, 1–4 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1990.

Caveman Games is basically the Olympics set in prehistoric times, giving players six nicely (and at times amusingly) illustrated events in which to compete: Clubbing, Mate Toss, Saber Race, Fire Start, Dino Race, and Dino Vault, each of which was included in the original computer game (1988), which was called *Caveman Ugh-Lympics*. Activities range from one-on-one fighting (using clubs) to throwing a girl by the hair to *Track & Field*-style racing. Timing and rapid button pushing are a must, but clunky gameplay and poor controls ruin what could have been a fun little collection.

Challenge of the Dragon

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player.
1990.

In *Challenge of the Dragon*, Sir Burkelot must battle his way through 10 worlds: Village, Grasslands, Big Wall, Master Ninja, Rocky Haven, Forest, Wizard's Village, Outer Castle, Graveyard, and Inner Castle. A master of kung fu, Burkelot can run, superrun, jump, flip, and pull off five different attacks: sword, knee to the

chest, side kick, flying dragon kick, and shoulder butt. He can also pick up and throw magic at the various knights, dragons, lizardmen, valkyries, ninjas, giants, and other enemies he will encounter. His goal is to rescue his girlfriend, Lady Ninita, who was captured by the evil Demiwind. Weak weaponry, sub par graphics, and limp gameplay make this game an easy one to skip. Unlicensed.

Championship Bowling

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Athena. Sports/Bowling, 1–4 players (alternating). 1989.

A nice port of Romstar's 1989 arcade game, *Championship Bowling* for the NES offers a selection of four characters of seemingly similar abilities, each of whom the player must name: a blonde Caucasian male (the only left-hander in the bunch); an African-American male; an Asian male; and a red-headed Caucasian female. The action, which is viewed from behind and a little above the bowler, lets players select ball weight (7, 9, 11, 13, or 15 pounds), position the bowler left and right, and set the power (via a fast-moving meter) and curve of the ball. A strip along the right side of the screen gives an overhead view of the lane and pins. The music is decidedly hyper, infusing dramatic punch into an already fun game. Curiously, a four-player adapter is *required* for three- and four-player games, despite the alternating nature of the gameplay. Not to be confused with the Genesis game of the same name.

Championship Pool

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Bitmasters. Sports/Billiards, 1–8 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1993.

Endorsed by the Billiard Congress of America, *Championship Pool* is viewed from overhead, with players using a cursor to aim shots and a power meter (which appears along with the cue in a pop-up window) to facilitate how hard to hit the ball. Prior to taking a shot, players can get a preview (via a phantom ball) of approximately where the hit ball will land if the player proceeds to take that shot. Players

can also set spin on the ball, move the camera around the table, zoom the camera in and out, view replays, and select from four different modes: Tournament (8-ball and 9-ball World Championship); Challenge (practice); Party (up to eight players); and Freestyle (trick shots, make up new rules). Game types include 14.1 Continuous, Rotation, Fifteen Ball, Straight Pool, Equal Offense, and Speed Pool. *Championship Pool* for the NES is a fine game, but the Genesis and SNES versions offer angled close-ups and richer graphics and sounds. Also released for the Game Boy.

The Cheetahmen II

PUBLISHER: Active Enterprises. DEVELOPER: Active Enterprises. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1996.

The sequel to *Cheetahmen*, which only appeared on the multi-game cartridge *Action 52*, *Cheetahmen II* was never released officially, thanks to financial and distribution problems suffered by Active Enterprises. However, 1500 copies of the game were originally produced prior to the downfall of Active, and, in 1996, these cartridges made their way into the hands of collectors and dealers via a liquidation sale. In the game, players guide an anthropomorphic cheetah as he walks, jumps on platforms (including gray squares suspended in the air), and leaps across gaps and over simpleminded dogs, birds, and snakes. Armed with a cross-bow, the cheetah also shoots swordsmen (whose bodies are invisible), tornadoes, and other enemies amongst such simplistic imagery as grass, posts, and skulls. The cheetah cannot duck, so lower enemies can't be shot. The programming is obviously unfinished as it gives players just four of a proposed six levels (the game crashes at the end of level four). Unlicensed.

The Chessmaster

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: The Software Toolworks. Board Game, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A nicely programmed port of the popular computer chess series (which began in 1986 with *The Chessmaster 2000*), *The Chessmaster* for

the NES lets gamers challenge a friend or play against the Chessmaster himself. Or, gamers can simply watch the Chessmaster play both sides of the board. At any time during a match, players can switch sides with the Chessmaster and assume control of his pieces (and vice versa). Other options and features include forcing the Chessmaster to move, taking back and replaying pieces, setting up the board as desired, making the Chessmaster solve for a forced mate, and more. There are 16 difficulty levels, giving gamers of most any skill level a good mental workout. The jazz classic “Take Five” plays during the title screen. Produced for numerous systems, *The Chessmaster* spawned such follow-ups as *The Chessmaster 3-D* (PlayStation) and *Chessmaster: The Art of Learning* (PSP, Nintendo DS).

Chiller

PUBLISHER: American Game Cartridges. DEVELOPER: Exidy. Light Gun Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on the 1986 Exidy arcade semi-classic, which was outfitted with a mounted gun controller, *Chiller* was not licensed by Nintendo, probably due to its extreme (for the system) levels of gore and sadistic violence (there were a few changes made, however, such as the removal of the graveyard nudity and the absence of the plethora of body parts lying about the torture chamber floor). Players use the Zapper light gun or the control pad to shoot zombies and talismans, the latter of which cause the dead to come back to life. Set in the Middle Ages, the game is chock full of horror imagery, including a graveyard, a haunted house, and a rack room. Unfortunately, thanks to inaccurate, unresponsive controls, gameplay comes up lacking, ruining the guilty pleasures such a game might provide.

Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Like *DuckTales*, *Rescue Rangers* is a quality Capcom game based on a Disney cartoon. Players guide either Chip or Dale on a mission

to find Mandy's lost kitten. This entails running, jumping, and throwing boxes and other items at such enemies as Racquet Roo, Rhino Runner, Hawk Bomber, mechanical bulldogs, and robotic rats. Thankfully, friends are also onboard: Gadget leaves clues and inventions; Monterey Jack helps in finding secret doors and pathways; and Zipper makes the titular squirrel duo invincible. *Rescue Rangers* is a tad easy, but the visuals and theme mimic the cartoon nicely.

Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers 2

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1994.

Rescue Rangers 2 features the same type of cute, entertaining platforming action as its progenitor, but with a number of improvements, including better graphics, more of a storyline, and the ability to throw boxes diagonally. As in the first game, boxes are also used for hiding. Chip and Dale can pick up stunned enemies this time around, and Gadget, Monterey Jack, and Zipper make return appearances, though in altered roles (Monterey gives out donuts, for example). Environments to run and jump through include a kitchen, a sewer, a ship, a haunted warehouse, a clock tower, and more.

Chubby Cherub

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

In *Chubby Cherub*, players guide a naked little angel as he walks (on roofs of houses, walls, and the ground), jumps, and flies (his primary method of transport) through cute, colorful, nicely drawn worlds, each containing biting dogs, egg-throwing crows, and puffs of smoke. There's even a burglar who throws firecrackers at our hapless hero. To scare the dogs and make them run away, Chubby Cherub can emit heart symbols with his “gau-gau” cannon. To maintain his strength throughout each level, Chubby must continually consume apples, grapes, shish kabobs, hamburgers, and cakes. Eating a P symbol makes Chubby temporarily invisible and invincible. Mission objec-

tives include delivering a microcomputer, giving a flower to the Mad Man, and discovering a clue that will help Chubby find his friend. *Chubby Cherub* is charming (or cavity-causing, depending on your perspective), but a bit lacking in the action department.

Circus Caper

PUBLISHER: Toho. DEVELOPER: Toho. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Mr. Magic has kidnapped Tim's sister and taken her deep inside a circus tent. In order to protect her, players, as Tim, must run and jump through six levels, punching and kicking monkeys, clowns, vultures, snakes, ghosts, elephants, tight-rope walkers, flying acrobats, and other enemies along the way. To help in defeating the various circus performers and their animals, gamers can pick up hammers, soccer balls, yoyos, and bombs. In addition, there are blocks for use in reaching high areas, and snapping alligator heads to hop on in order to cross water. Bonus points are earned via a fire-jumping mini-game. Despite oddly sinister circus music and unusually high jumps (by the protagonist and by certain enemies), *Circus Caper* is a largely typical side-scroller.

City Connection

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

City Connection is similar conceptually to the console and computer classic *Miner 2049er*, but instead of guiding Bounty Bob, players take the wheel of a Honda City hatchback. The objective in each of the game's seven side-scrolling, multi-platform, wraparound levels is to drive over every section of highway, painting it in the process. Police cars frequently get in the way, as do buses, cats, and spikes (which appear when players spend too much time on any one level), but they can be jumped over or otherwise avoided. In addition, the car can shoot oil cans at the enemy vehicles. Grabbing three red balloons transports players one or two levels ahead. Like its better looking coin-op cousin (Jaleco, 1985), *City Connection* for the NES features such familiar landmarks in the

background as the Statue of Liberty and the Eiffel Tower.

Clash at Demonhead

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Although not as well known or as widely heralded as such mega-hits as *Metroid* and *Super Mario Bros. 3*, *Clash at Demonhead* is one fine game. The protagonist, a guy named Bang, is extremely versatile as he can walk, jump, squat, climb, swim, shoot, fly (via jet pack), don a super suit, and strap on hyper boots (for increased speed and power). Anime-style graphics, selectable routes (via a map screen), strange bosses, quirky humor, and a shop where Bang can purchase items add to the depth and enjoyment of the game. Bang's mission is to explore Demonhead Mountain, rescue Professor Plum, and deactivate a doomsday bomb.

Classic Concentration

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Softie. Game Show, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on the TV game show, which aired on NBC from 1987 through 1991 (earlier incarnations of the program were simply titled "*Concentration*"), *Classic Concentration* has players opening doors on a numbered, 25-door game board. Each door hides the name of a prize, such as a trip or a mink coat. During each turn, players open two doors in hopes of getting a match, which will grant the player that prize and make that pair of doors disappear. Each door that disappears reveals part of a rebus puzzle. After any match, the player can guess the rebus puzzle. Wild cards, eight selectable contestants, and timed final rounds add to the fun. As with most video games based on game shows, puzzles do begin repeating themselves sooner than most players would prefer. Similar to (but more sophisticated than): *Hunt & Score* (Atari 2600).

Cliffhanger

PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Sony Imagesoft. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Based on the 1993 feature film, *Cliffhanger* for the NES puts players in the role of Rocky Mountain rescue ace Gabe Walker, who Sylvester Stallone played in the movie. Walker must run, jump, crouch, climb (on ladders and ropes), and make flying leaps through seven poorly drawn, washed-out looking levels of mountain-based action, collecting money and dodging such obstacles as falling icicles, run-away boulders, and bottomless pits. Walker can punch and kick venomous bats, rabid wolves, evil henchmen, and other enemies he will meet, but he can also pick up and use a gun, a knife, dynamite, and rocks. Other pick-ups include spiked boots (for running in snow) and climbing gloves (for ascending a frozen waterfall). Near the end of the game, Walker must battle Eric Qualen's helicopter and then Qualen himself (in the movie, Qualen was played by John Lithgow). Much different than the Genesis, SNES, and Sega CD versions of the game.

Clu Clu Land

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Maze, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1985.

A fun, challenging, highly original take on the maze genre, *Clu Clu Land* has players guiding a cute, round, fish-like creature named Bubbles around a series of mazes marked with turn posts. The only way to make turns in each maze is by bouncing off walls or by hooking a hand around said turn posts. Each maze contains a pattern of hidden gold bars. When Bubbles passes above a hidden bar, it will appear onscreen. The objective is to uncover all the hidden gold bars (forming an outline of a picture, such as a face or a house) in order to progress to the next maze. While *Clu Clu* works at uncovering gold bars, deadly sea urchins prowl the maze, but they can be ward off with electric shocks. Other things appearing in the maze include black holes, rubber traps, timers (for freezing the clock, the sea urchin, and the opposing player), and money sacks and fruit (for extra points). A system launch title.

Cobra Command

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

This pedestrian port of the 1988 Data East arcade game has poor controls and replaces the sharp, textured graphics of the original with sheer mediocrity (including blurry backgrounds). Gameplay is similar to *Choplifter*, but not as good. Players guide a helicopter back and forth across scrolling skies, firing away at enemy choppers, tanks, soldiers, cannons, and warships, frequently swooping down to lower a rope or a ladder to rescue hostages. The copter can be upgraded with various types of guns, missiles, and armor. Not to be confused with *Cobra Command* for the Sega CD.

Cobra Triangle

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Rare. Watercraft Racing/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

This game puts players behind the wheel of a Cobra Class Speed Boat, racing against other boats, jumping over waterfalls, shooting targets and sea monsters, protecting swimmers, dodging whirlpools, disposing of mines, and more. Pods can be collecting for upgrading the boat's guns, missiles, and speed. There are 25 levels to cruise through, each of which features an angled, *R.C. Pro-Am*-like perspective. An early game by Rare, the company that would go on to develop such favorites as *Perfect Dark* (Nintendo 64) and *Donkey Kong Country* (Super NES), *Cobra Triangle* is a fun, finely programmed game that is a challenge to the finish.

Code Name: Viper

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

A dramatic, non-nonsense, War on Drugs-influenced game, *Code Name: Viper* puts players in the role of an agent working his way through the jungles of South America and a drug lord's fortresses, opening doors to find hostages, health, and ammo. Agent Viper is equipped with a handgun and a machine gun for killing snipers, napalm soldiers, maniacs, frogmen, and hidden warriors. Obstacles to jump over (Viper can shoot and maneuver during jumps) or otherwise avoid include acid drops, bombs, and statue-traps. Based on Cap-

com's 1989 arcade game, which did include a two-player alternating mode. Similar to: *Rolling Thunder* (arcade, NES).

Color a Dinosaur

PUBLISHER: Virgin. DEVELOPER: FarSight Technologies. Art, 1 player. 1993.

Recommended for children ages three to six, *Color a Dinosaur* lets players do just that: color a dinosaur. Actually, there are 16 different dinosaur outlines (including a Tyrannosaurus Rex, a Triceratops, a Brontosaurus, and a Pterodactyl), and there's not really any coloring involved since clicking on a section of a dinosaur simply prompts the computer to automatically box in that section with color. There are 4 palettes, 11 colors, and 9 patterns from which to choose. The manual, which includes a brief history of dinosaurs, recommends that kids record their creations on VHS tape, which is no big deal since any TV-based video game can be recorded in this fashion. The award-winning Tommy Tallarico (*Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, *Maximo: Ghosts to Glory*) did the music and sound, but a lack of animations, celebrations, or any other such flourishes makes *Color a Dinosaur* extremely limited in nature.

Commando

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players. 1986.

Based on the 1985 Data East arcade game, *Commando* is a typically fine NES port, featuring rock solid gameplay, but less detailed graphics and lots of flickering (especially among the vehicles that drive across the screen). Armed with a rifle and a limited number of grenades (which can be replenished), players, as Super Joe, must venture into a "deep, unexplored jungle region," shooting and bombing members of the Evil Empire Army, some of whom hide behind barricades, perch on bridges, and duck into holes. Enemies are equipped with knives, guns, and grenade launchers, and they swarm like crazy all over the screen, providing a fairly intense gaming experience. To accommodate the dimensions of a typical television screen, the playfield is much wider than that of the more rectangular

coin-op classic. Also, the ground in the NES game is orange instead of tan, and Super Joe is shown eating instead of smoking as he rests at the end of the first level. Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari 7800, and Intellivision. Followed by: *Bionic Commando* (arcade, NES, Game Boy).

Conan

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: System 3 Software. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1991.

Adapted from the PC game *Myth: History in the Making*, the dreadful, poorly programmed *Conan* for the NES puts players in the role of the titular barbarian (who was created by writer Robert E. Howard in 1932 via a series of stories published in *Weird Tales* magazine). Conan must journey through the Catcombs of Belveras, the Ruins of Ry-leeh, the Forests of Asgard, and other exotic (or at least exotic sounding) worlds, jumping on platforms and using pitiful, sluggish attacks (including short-range punches, limp swordsmanship, and hard-to-execute jump-kicks) to battle imps, Satan, skeletons, Medusa, giants, dragons, and other enemies. Beating the game (which is virtually impossible without cheat codes) "rewards" players with an ending that is as lame and as hastily put together as the game itself.

Conflict

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai. Turn-Based Strategy, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Conflict is a turn-based strategy game pitting NATO forces (the good guys) against members of the Warsaw Pact (the bad guys). Players maneuver air and ground forces across 16 different top-down view hexagonal maps (all featuring fictional scenarios), the ultimate goal being to destroy the opponent's Flag tank (an M1A1 for the blue team and a T-80 for the guys in red). This is achieved by giving tactical orders to offensive and defensive units, capturing cities and airbases, and defeating enemy units. Successful operations net players "fame" points, which can be used by factories to produce weaponry. Followed by: *Super Conflict*

(SNES), which features a fictional, Gulf War-like setting.

Conquest of the Crystal Palace

PUBLISHER: Asmik. DEVELOPER: Quest. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

An engaging, action-packed game, *Conquest of the Crystal Palace* sends a 15-year-old boy (Prince Farron) and his dog (Zap) through five stages: Mount Crystal, Realm of the Guardian, Lair of the Hungry Ghosts, Gateway of Flame, and Realm of Zaras. Players begin the game armed with a sword and one of three power crystals (spirit, life, or flight), but can visit shops to purchase a variety of useful items and weapons, including herbs, the nuker (projectile that travels in a spiral), jumping shoes, a boomerang annihilator, a spherical weapon, and a dog whistle, the latter of which makes Zap attack more aggressively (Zap helps in battling the birds, skeletons, spiders, and other enemies). Jumping on moving ledges, avoiding spikes, and other such platforming staples supplement the combat nicely.

Contra

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Contra is a tour de force of manly gaming, putting players in control of a muscle bound soldier from the Special Forces elite commando squad. Armed with the ability to run, jump, duck, and fire a gun (at aliens and their evil henchmen), the guerilla warrior must blast his way through eight stages of brutal action: Jungle, Base 1, Waterfall, Base 2, Snow Field, Energy Zone, Hangar Zone, and Alien's Lair. Bases 1 and 2 sport a behind-the-soldier perspective while Waterfall features vertical scrolling. Capturing flying power-ups enables players to upgrade their firepower to machine gun, laser, fireball, rapid fire, and, most famously, the awesome spread gun. Like its more graphically detailed (yet less well known) coin-op counterpart (Konami, 1987), a second gamer can join in for cooperative action. Pressing up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right,

B, A at the title screen lets players begin with 30 lives, a maneuver that popularized the so-called Konami Code. Followed by: *Super C* (NES).

Contra Force

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Contra Force is the third and final game in the NES *Contra* series, and it's somewhat of a departure from *Contra* and *Super C* (it's slower and less intense, for example). Set in the fictional metropolis of Neo City, the game lets players select from four different characters (before and during gameplay), each with varying skills (including speed and jumping ability). A short-range pistol is the default weapon, but, depending on the character, players can upgrade to: hand grenades and machine guns (Burn); a flamethrower and a bazooka (Iron); a rifle and homing missiles (Smith); and time bombs and time mines (Beans). Simultaneous action returns, but solo players can now call upon an AI-controlled partner for assistance. Levels include Dewerdye Warehouse, U.S.S. Unkmy Battleship, Sheeshee Towers Construction Site, Thunder Wolf Helicopter, and C-Force Headquarters. Two of the five levels are viewed from overhead and scroll vertically. *Contra Force* was released the same year as *Contra III: The Alien Wars* (SNES), which was followed by *Contra: Hard Corps* (Genesis), *Contra 4* (Nintendo DS), and other sequels.

Cool World

PUBLISHER: Ocean. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Based on Ralph Bakshi's live action/animated film (1992), *Cool World* puts gamers in the role of Detective Frank Harris (played by Brad Pitt in the movie), who must thwart the beautiful Holli Would's plan of getting a flesh-and-blood body and existing in the real world. This requires running and jumping through four areas (Cool World, The Highway, Sweet Place, and Countryside), dodging obstacles (collapsing platforms, acid rivers, manholes, and the like), collecting pieces of a map, and using cartoonish weapons to defeat goons, street

urchins, a giant rabbit, dragons, and other enemies. Weapons include stink bombs, carrots, balloons, an eraser, a pen, and more. Once Frank makes it to the Ocean Hotel in Las Vegas, he must climb to the top of the building using window ledges and fire escape ladders, ultimately confronting Holli herself. The SNES version includes driving sections and the ability for Harris to stretch his arms. Also released for the Game Boy.

Cowboy Kid

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Seta. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

In *Cowboy Kid*, players control a young gunslinger named Sam as he embarks on a mission to exact vengeance on the Scorpion gang for killing his father, who was the sheriff of Villatown at the time of his death. After selecting a bandit to go after (from a list of such characters as Coyote Jim and Wild Wolf Chief), Sam will open treasure chests, enter shops, acquire guns and knives, use keys to unlock doors, eat food to increase hit points, and battle a bevy of bad guys. Sam can even play a little blackjack. The music fits the Old West setting (which is disappointingly cartoonish), and the fighting scenes play a lot like a side-scrolling combat game (unlike the overhead view action of *The Legend of Zelda* and other such similar games). In two-player mode, a sympathetic Indian warrior named Little Chief joins in to help.

Crash 'n' the Boys: Street Challenge

PUBLISHER: Technos. DEVELOPER: Technos. Sports/Miscellaneous, 1–4 players (alternating, two-player simultaneous). 1992.

This game has super deformed, *River City Ransom*-style characters competing in five different events. 400 Meter Hurdles is indeed a hurdles race, but players can kick the other runners and throw pieces of broken hurdles at them. Hammer Throw has players pressing a button rapidly to get their character to spin faster in order to throw the hammer further down a golf-like course. The lack of an overhead view course indicator ruins this game since players cannot preview trap locations.

Viewed from in front of the swimmers, *Swimming* is a swim race, but with players pulling and kicking to try and drown one another. *Roof Top Jumping* has players pole-vaulting and riding unicycles (across tightropes) to go from roof to roof. Finally, *Fighting Scene* (a.k.a. Judo) is a simple, one-on-one fighting game in which players punch, kick, jump-kick, charge, shoulder-tackle, and pull off special moves. A shopping mall lets players purchase health and performance-enhancing equipment.

Crystal Mines

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Maze/Maze Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

Boulder Dash fans should enjoy *Crystal Mines*, which has players guiding a mining robot deep beneath the surface of a planet, using energy balls to dig through dirt and rock while grabbing crystals. The objective is to gather enough crystals to meet the quota within the time limit given in each of the game's 100 levels. Various enemies (including rock, mud, lava, and gas creatures) make this a challenge, but robot gunfire, falling objects, and explosions can kill them. Prizes and weapons to find include rapid fire, bombs, protection, bags of gold, freeze timers, and more. Includes password feature. Unlicensed. Followed by: *Crystal Mines II* (Atari Lynx). See also: *Exodus: Journey to the Promised Land* (NES) and *Joshua and the Battle of Jericho* (NES).

Crystalis

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

Taking place 100 years after the Great War, when sorcery and magic had supplanted science and technology, *Crystalis* stars a young magician searching the land (Death Desert, Tower in the Sky, Wind Valley, Angry Sea, Mt. Sabre, and five other areas) for four elemental swords (wind, fire, water, and thunder), the combining of which will form a weapon capable of defeating the evil Draygon. Each sword can be powered up in various ways. Gameplay consists of killing enemies to gain experience

and strength, communicating with townsfolk, visiting shops, solving puzzles, and acquiring shields, armor, rabbit boots (for jumping), fruit of Reeun (for removing a curse that turns the magician into a monster), thunder, x-ray goggles, keys, magic spells, and other tools, weapons, and power-ups. Includes battery back-up. Also released for the Game Boy Color.

Cyber Stadium Series — Base Wars

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Sports/Baseball/Futuristic, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

The two primary elements of *Base Wars* that set it apart from the average NES baseball game are robot players and battles for bases on force out plays and close calls. The robots can be upgraded with various guns, swords, special catches, and other useful items, but the battles are basic one-on-one button-mashers (featuring a close-up view of the action). In terms of actual baseball, the screen oftentimes scrolls slower than the ball moves, making for problematic fielding, but pitching is fun since the player has full control of the ball after release. Includes Team Edit mode and battery backup.

Cyberball

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Atari. Sports/Futuristic, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Like its Genesis counterpart, *Cyberball* for the NES gives players more than 100 offensive plays to choose from (along with 12 defensive formations), which is significantly more than found in Atari's 1988 arcade game (which was a huge machine boasting four-player capabilities and two monitors). Unfortunately, the robot players are less detailed, and the field has a flatter look. The game is overhead-view, vertically scrolling, seven-on-seven football of the future (2022, to be exact), with rules that would make George Carlin proud. There are no penalties (field goals have been removed as well), and the ball is a bomb that will explode if the player fails to get a touchdown or cross the 50-yard line within four downs. There are four selectable teams (as opposed to 28 in the Genesis version). Atari released an arcade sequel in

1989 (*Cyberball 2072*), but it was only ported to the Atari Lynx (as *Tournament Cyberball*).

Cybernoid: The Fighting Machine

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Gremlin Graphics. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

In the notoriously difficult *Cybernoid*, players must pilot a spacefighter through three asteroid storage facilities, collecting cargo, resisting gravity, dodging obstacles, and blowing away giant green blobs, caterpillar death squads, and other enemies. Each of the more than 150 rooms contains a time bomb, meaning timely exits are crucial. The spacefighter, which can fly in all directions and shoot left and right, is equipped with a laser blaster, bombs, and genocide missiles, but players can also acquire shields, bouncers (which bounce off walls and destroy everything in their path), seekers (which hone in on ground installations), and a cybermace (which circles the ship). Adapted from the Commodore 64 game of the same name.

Dance Aerobics

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Sports/Exercise, 1 player. 1989.

Designed for Nintendo's Power Pad control mat, *Dance Aerobics* helps gamers keep physically fit by providing 12 stages of aerobic conditioning and 64 separate aerobic routines. The format is that of a dance studio class, with eight levels of play — two apiece for each skill level: introductory, beginner, intermediate, and advanced. An onscreen instructor (complete with leg warmers and headband) leads gamers as they hop, stretch, bend, dance, and otherwise move to the music.

Danny Sullivan's Indy Heat

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Despite poor sound effects and somewhat downgraded (though still very nice) graphics, *Danny Sullivan's Indy Heat* is a finely programmed port of Leland's 1991 three-player arcade game. Up to four gamers (via multi-tap

adaptor) can race around nine different non-scrolling tracks: Western Canada, New Jersey, Southern California, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Eastern Canada, Colorado, and Tradewest Speed Bowl. A fifth car is always driven by Indy 500 champ (1985) Danny Sullivan. Winning races grants players cash to purchase turbo boosts and better brakes, tires, engines, pit crew members (drivers occasionally pull over to refuel and douse engine fires), and miles per gallon. As in the similar *Ivan “Ironman” Stewart’s Super Off Road* (NES), the racing action is viewed from overhead.

Darkman

PUBLISHER: Ocean. DEVELOPER: Ocean. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

Based on the 1990 feature film, in which a vengeful scientist (played by Liam Neeson) develops a new type of synthetic skin, *Darkman* takes place at a warehouse, in Central Park, at a funhouse, in Chinatown, and across a partially constructed building. Players guide the title character as he punches and kicks bad guys, rides moving platforms, walks across ledges and tightropes, hangs from a helicopter on a rope ladder, bounces on springs, dodges spinning blades, takes photos to create a mask (the most original aspect of the game), and more. Weapons Darkman can use include a gun, rocks, and throwing stars. Similar to *Batman* (NES), but not as good. Also released for the Game Boy.

Darkwing Duck

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Darkwing Duck, which is based on the Disney cartoon series, plays a lot like *Mega Man*, but the titular fowl can do three things Mega Man cannot: grab ledges and hooks, use a cape as a shield, and, fittingly enough, duck. Darkwing’s gas gun uses three types of ammo: heavy gas, which sends a shockwave across the floor; thunder gas, which releases two bolts of lightning; and arrow gas, which can be shot at walls to help Darkwing get past obstacles. His job is to gather gold and diamonds and defeat

the Liquidator, Quackerjack, Wolfduck, and other F.O.W.L. agents. This surprisingly challenging game meets Capcom’s usual standards of rock solid gameplay and stellar graphics. Different renditions of *Darkwing Duck* were released by other companies for the Game Boy and TurboGrafx-16.

Dash Galaxy in the Alien Asylum

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Adventure Puzzle/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

An unusual mix of puzzler and platformer, *Dash Galaxy* puts players in the role of a fearless space explorer on a distant planet, trying to make it back to his ship. Each level begins in an overhead-view elevator shaft, with players entering rooms by passing through doorways, some of which are blocked by force fields or blocks. Blocks can be rearranged, and both force fields and blocks can be blown up with bombs. Once inside a room, play switches to a side-view perspective, with Dash running and climbing slowly (but certainly not dashingly) and jumping awkwardly (on platforms and trampolines) as he turns off switches, avoids aliens, and grabs keys, bombs, detonators, stars, oxygen, and other useful items.

Day Dreamin’ Davy

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Overhead View Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1992.

Using the greatest time machine in history (his imagination), Davy goes on a journey through three distinctive worlds: Medieval, Greek Mythology, and Western. Each world has thematic enemies (such as knights, gnomes, satyrs, bats, rattlesnakes, buzzards, and/or birds), and each has era-appropriate weaponry (swords, spears, bows and arrows, rifles, shotguns, and the like). Other items to purchase or trade for include shields, snake elixir, magic potions, fairy dust (for invincibility), sundials (for stopping time), and more. To reach airborne enemies or make it past rocks and other obstacles, Davy can jump. Certain characters, such as nymphs and the sheriff, provide limited assistance. Some strategy is involved as

specific items are required to beat certain enemies.

Days of Thunder

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Stock Car Racing, 1 player. 1990.

Based on the 1990 feature film starring Tom Cruise, *Days of Thunder* pits rookie driver Cole Trickle against 15 other drivers (including Rowdy Burns and Russ Wheeler) in an eight-race series cup, which includes such raceways as Daytona Beach and Talladega. To perform well, players must master side-slamming, slipstreaming, and making use of the pipeline. Plus, there's a pit crew (viewed from overhead), meaning players have direct control over refueling, changing tires, and repairing the engine. This is a difficult (if nice looking) racer that casual gamers should avoid. Also released for the Game Boy.

Deadly Towers

PUBLISHER: Broderbund. DEVELOPER: Irem Software. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1987.

In *Deadly Towers*, players control Prince Myer on a mission to climb seven poorly designed bell towers, remove the bells, and burn down the towers. Myer is outfitted with a short sword and can upgrade his weapon several times for battling an assortment of uninspired enemies, including sparks, devils, and slime creatures. The most powerful primary weapon is Splendor, a golden sword of legend. Other power-ups and helpful items include shields, helmets, double shot (which lets players shoot two swords), armor, warps, green crystals (which freeze the monsters), blue necklaces (for invincibility), green drinks (which restore 200 hit points), magic keys, hyper boots (for climbing stairs faster), and more. *Deadly Towers* is ambitious in concept, but fans of action-oriented RPGs should stick with *The Legend of Zelda*. Includes password feature.

Death Race

PUBLISHER: American Game Cartridges. DEVELOPER: American Game Cartridges. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Death Race for the NES is somewhat similar to Exidy's 1976 arcade game of the same name. Both are viewed from an overhead perspective; both refer to the people you run over as "gremlins"; and both offer two-player simultaneous action. However, the cult coin-op classic, which does benefit from steering wheel control, has black-and-white graphics, no pit stops, and no shooting mechanism. In the NES game, players can fire a machine gun and missiles at the pedestrians (and at silos and other vehicles). The NES version also lets players capture flags (before the timer expires) and purchase special guns, tires, engines, chassis, and missiles. Loosely based on *Death Race 2000* (1975), the infamous film starring Sylvester Stallone. Unlicensed.

Deathbots

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Odyssey Software. Maze Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

In *Deathbots*, players guide a man in a battle suit through a labyrinthine, eight-level gamma base, with the ultimate goal of destroying a powerful bomb located deep underground. As players work their way through various corridors, walking over floor pads to open doors, robots, genetically engineered creatures, flying sentinels, and other enemies will attack. To ward off the baddies, players are armed with a handgun and can acquire such selectable weaponry as a laser pistol, a laser rifle, a blaster pistol, hand grenades, and a shield belt. Mines should be avoided while transporters, which look similar to mines, transport players to new locations. The game has a uniform (i.e. redundant) industrial look and is marred by poor programming. Unlicensed.

Defender of the Crown

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Master Designer Software. Turn-Based Strategy, 1 player. 1989.

A graphically simplified port of the Amiga computer game (1986), *Defender of the Crown* for the NES takes place in England, circa A.D. 1149. Gamers play as one of four Saxon knights, each rated according to leadership, jousting,

and swordplay. The objective is to acquire land through conquests, jousting, and morning star tournaments. Players must raid and defend castles, engage in swordfights, capture unguarded territories, move through friendly lands, and strategically place knights, soldiers, and catapults (catapult ammo includes boulders, fire, and disease). Also released for the Game Boy Advance and Philips CD-i. Followed by: *Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown* (PS2, Xbox).

Defender II

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Slide-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Defender II for the NES handles well and looks pretty good, but it's absent a number of things found in Williams' *StarGate* (1981), the arcade game upon which it is based. Missing features include hyperspace, the Inviso cloaking device, Yllabian Dogfight waves, and Fire-bomber Showdown waves. In addition, players cannot take falling innocents back to the ground or shoot them while they are on the ground. Also, in *StarGate*, the planet explodes if all the innocents are killed, but that explosion never happens here. Like NES *Joust*, *Defender II* introduces music where there was none before. The side-scrolling, wraparound gameplay has

players flying over a mountainous planet, shooting laser beams at aliens. Smart bombs destroy all onscreen enemies. Also released for the Atari 2600.

Defenders of Dynatron City

PUBLISHER: JVC Musical Industries. DEVELOPER: Lucasfilm Games. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

Featuring an original super-hero team, *Defenders of Dynatron City* lets gamers play as six different characters, each with different powers: Buzzsaw Girl (blade, somersault attack); Monkey Kid (banana bombs); Jet Headstrong (fly, throw cars, fire head like rocket); Ms. Megawatt (run fast, throw lightning bolts); Radium Dog (atomic bite, throw cars, dog paddle through the air); and a robot named Toolbox (hammerhead smash, spring jump). The heroes battle through The Streets of Dynatron City, Mega Mall, The Sewers, and Proto-Cola Factory, ending up in a face-off against Dr. Mayhem. The action sounds good on paper, but poor collision detection makes fighting enemies (robosaurs, mutated monsters, and the like) frustratingly difficult, ruining the experience. Despite its deficiencies, *Defenders of Dynatron City* spawned an animated Fox TV special and a six-issue Marvel comic book series.



Like movies, popular video games often spawn sequels. Pictured are *Defender II* and *Gauntlet II* for the NES.

Déjà Vu

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: ICOM Simulations. First-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

This point-and-click adventure is literally a journey of self discovery. As the game begins, players wake up groggy, with blood on their right hand, a puncture mark on their left arm, and no idea of who they are. Gameplay involves selecting from a list of commands (open, examine, take, move, use, hit) and using a pointer to interact with any number of objects on the way to solving the mystery, including doors, mirrors, prescription drugs, a slot machine, a mugger, elevators, a

taxi cab, and much more. The pointer moves slowly, and the view of the action is limited to one fourth of the screen, but piecing together the story is both challenging and interesting. Includes battery backup. Based on the 1987 computer game, *Deja Vu: A Nightmare Comes True!!*, which benefited from mouse control. Followed by: *Déjà Vu I & II: The Casebooks of Ace Harding* (Game Boy Color).

Demon Sword

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Platform/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

An unofficial sequel to *The Legend of Kage*, *Demon Sword* stars a sword-wielding, star-throwing ninja, who runs and jumps through a Bamboo Forest, a Temple Graveyard, and five other levels, battling (or avoiding) a variety of monsters. The ninja is agile and can jump super high (even to the tops of trees), but landing can be problematic, thanks to holes and other traps. His sword starts off tiny, but is extended with the defeat of each boss. Magic provides keys, fireballs, lightning, the ability to become three invincible warriors, and other useful items and powers.

Desert Commander

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Turn-Based Strategy, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Although the storyline is generic, *Desert Commander* appears to be a loose, fast-paced reenactment of the North African Campaign (also called the Desert War), fought between Allied and Axis powers (primarily the Brits and the Germans) during World War II. Players take turns issuing commands to their units by moving an onscreen cursor. After a unit has been selected, a window appears detailing available commands (movement, attack, power, and the like), fuel and ammo supply, and more. Types of units include tank, armored car, transport, supply truck, field cannon, anti-aircraft gun, infantry, fighter, and bomber. Terrain, such as towns, bunkers, airports, and rocks, plays a strategic role, as does the customization of forces (though players can select

default mode). The objective is to destroy all the enemy units and capture their headquarters.

Destination Earthstar

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Space Combat Simulator/Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

In *Destination Earthstar*, players perform such typical space combat simulator maneuvers as navigating a galactic grid map to locate enemy ships, engaging said ships in battle (there are eight stages in all), refueling at space stations, replenishing weapons at armories, and repairing ship damage. Unfortunately for NES owners, Atari did much of this better with *Star Raiders* eight years earlier. After players destroy all the enemies in a stage and land on a planet, the action switches to a poorly rendered, though marginally entertaining side-scroller, with gamers shooting front-end lasers and rear-firing missiles at fast and slow alien vessels (destroying faster enemies produces more points). The ship can also do barrel rolls.

Destiny of an Emperor

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Strategy Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

Viewed from an overhead, *Legend of Zelda*-like perspective, *Destiny of an Emperor* takes place in ancient, war-torn China, an era popularized by the novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Luo Guanzhong, 14th century). From a large pool of officers, players select a party of seven, five of whom can engage in combat. The other two serve as replacement character and strategist, the latter capable of employing such tactics as fire, water, and healing. Battles, which offer a side-view perspective, are strategic in nature, with players selecting from the following choices: battle, tactic, defend, item, retreat, report, and all-out (a speedy, computer-controlled system where all living characters run to the center of the screen and duke it out). Instead of hit points, as in most RPGs, combatants in *Destiny* command a certain number of troops. Includes battery backup. See also: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (NES).

Dick Tracy

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Realtime Associates. Adventure/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Unlike the Genesis and SMS versions of *Dick Tracy*, which are simplistic platformers, the NES game lets players gather clues, look at mug shots, interrogate criminals, do some overhead view driving (while avoiding sniper fire and shooting enemy cars), and visit a police station for renewed health. After entering a building (other than the police station), Tracy will punch and shoot bad guys and dogs, jump over obstacles, and climb ropes, ladders, and pipes. Special weapons to grab include a Tommy gun (for rapid fire), tear gas, and knock-out punches. Based on the 1990 feature film (which, in turn, was based on Chester Gould's classic comic strip). Also released for the Game Boy, but without the driving sequences.

Die Hard

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Pack-In-Video. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

A terrorist group led by Hans Gruber has infiltrated the Nakatomi Building, ruining a Christmas party attended by John McClane and his lovely wife, Holly. John's mission is to stop Hans from blowing up the roof, killing the hostages, and absconding with Holly and a fortune in bonds. This involves running around the labyrinthine building, punching and shooting bad guys while finding and breaking seven different locks. John begins with a pistol, but can obtain a sub machine gun, extra ammo, a radio (for listening in on Hans' plans and contacting the police), flash grenades, C4 explosives, an axe, and detonators. The non-linear action takes John through heating/air conditioning vents, up and down stairways and elevators, through finished and unfinished offices, and more. As in the 1988 feature film (which starred Bruce Willis as the hero), John slows down after walking on broken glass, which is a nice touch in an already impressive game.

Dig Dug II: Trouble in Paradise

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Namco. Overhead View Action, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

An obscure sequel to the popular coin-op classic *Dig Dug* (Namco, 1982), *Dig Dug II: Trouble in Paradise* is a nice port (despite blinking when the screen gets busy) of Namco's 1985 arcade game (which was simply called *Dig Dug II*). Once again, Dig Dug walks around the screen, using a pump (called an "inflator" here) to blow up and destroy round, shades-wearing Pooka and fire-breathing Fygar. However, unlike the original *Dig Dug*, which found the title character digging maze trails, *Dig Dug II* has players drilling on fault lines to sink sections of an island, killing nearby enemies in the process. Drilling three pieces of an island into the ocean makes a bonus vegetable appear, and flying fish can be caught as well. There are 72 islands in this fun, addictive, strategy-intensive game. The original *Dig Dug* didn't make it to the NES, but console gamers can play that classic on the Atari 7800, Game Boy, and various other systems. Followed by: *Dig Dug: Digging Strike* (2005, Nintendo DS).

Digger T. Rock: The Legend of the Lost City

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Published by board game giant Milton Bradley (*Operation*, *Battleship*) and developed by fan favorite Rare (*Gunstar Heroes*, *Donkey Kong Country*), *Digger T. Rock*, despite the mainstream pedigree, is an obscure title. Players assume the title role of an explorer who looks like a small child (he favors Calvin of *Calvin and Hobbes*), but wields a mean shovel, which he can use to hit ghosts, skeletons, dinosaurs, and other enemies, many of which respawn. More importantly, he can use the shovel to dig down through caverns. Digger can also kick enemies, crawl through narrow passageways, jump on ledges, throw rocks, climb ladders (selectable via an inventory system), use dynamite (for breaking walls), and grab diamonds (cash), goblets (points), and mushrooms (invincibility). The objective in each level is to find the exit door.

Dirty Harry

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Gray Matter. Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Loosely based on the popular film series (“Go ahead, punk ... make my day”), this mediocre game puts players in the Clint Eastwood role of “Dirty” Harry Callahan, a vigilante cop on the trail of Anaconda, a ferocious drug kingpin. The action takes place in The Streets, on The Waterfront, and in and around Alcatraz, with players shooting, punching, and kicking bad guys, climbing up buildings and telephone poles, entering sewers through manholes, jumping across rooftops, grabbing helpful items (including bulletproof vests, plastic explosives, crowbars, and missile launchers), avoiding mines, snakes, falling rocks, and laser security systems, and much more. Produced and directed by Don Siegel, the first (of five) *Dirty Harry* movie was released by Warner Bros. in 1971.

Dizzy the Adventurer

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure Puzzle, 1 player. 1993.

The pack-in game with the Aladdin Deck Enhancer, *Dizzy the Adventurer* was the only Aladdin title that was not previously released as a standard NES cartridge. Players guide the egg-shaped hero as he endeavors to save his girlfriend from an evil wizard. Gameplay revolves around platform jumping, collecting 50 stars, and solving puzzles by manipulating objects, such as the first scenario where Dizzy uses a match and straw to burn down a door, then a bucket of water to put out the fire. Dizzy also builds a bridge, gives a harp to St. Peter, uses pliers to pull a thorn out of a lion’s paw, and much more. Curiously, falling from high places does not kill Dizzy (few things in this game are lethal), but water does. See also: *The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy* (NES). Unlicensed.

Dr. Chaos

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

As Michael Chaos, players must search for their scientist brother, who has inadvertently

unleashed vampire bats, flying skeletons, and other transdimensional monsters all over his house. Michael begins with a knife, but can collect a pistol, a machine gun, grenades, jump boots, an air helmet, a shield suit, and a laser, the latter of which is gained by defeating 10 bosses. Filled with diverse challenges, *Dr. Chaos* alternates between a standard third-person/side-view perspective, with typical jumps and attacks, and a first-person viewpoint, where players guide a hand around a room, searching for medicines, weapons, and warp zone entrances.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Advanced Communication. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

A butchering of Robert Louis Stevenson’s seminal *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), this mess of a game finds Dr. Jekyll walking through a town, a park, and a cemetery (six levels in all), trying to get to the church to marry Miss Millicent. Jekyll jumps sluggishly and fights enemies (townsfolk, birds, spiders, and the like) by weakly poking a cane at them. Should Jekyll’s agitation meter get full from taking too much damage, he transforms into Mr. Hyde, who battles through forced-scrolling stages, punching and using a psycho-wave to defeat the various hunchbacks, demons, flying skulls, and other creatures he will encounter. One of the worst games in the NES library, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is so bad it’s scary.

Dr. Mario

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

In this *Tetris*-inspired puzzler, Mario, positioned near the top of the screen, drops vitamin capsules into a bottle filled with viruses, and the player must rotate the capsules and position them in such a way as to remove the viruses from the screen. The capsules, which are divided into color-coded halves, come in red, yellow, and blue, as do the viruses. When four or more capsule halves and/or viruses of

the same color are lined up in a row, they disappear. *Dr. Mario* is one of the better puzzle video games for any system, thanks to pleasant audio/visuals, strategic gameplay, and smooth difficulty progression. Also released for the SNES (via *Tetris & Dr. Mario*) and Game Boy. Followed by: *Dr. Mario 64* (Nintendo 64) and *Dr. Mario & Puzzle League* (Game Boy Advance).

Donkey Kong

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

Like the ColecoVision and Atari 7800 versions, *Donkey Kong* for the NES is missing one of the screens found in Nintendo's 1981 coin-op classic (the Conveyor Belt level), as well as the animated intermissions. However, the remaining three screens are nicely emulated, despite altered placement of certain items, slower elevators, and various other nitpicks. In addition, the NES port has much better sound effects (including Mario's squeaky shoes) than the 7800 game. As most classic gamers know, *DK* has players guiding Mario up and down ladders and across steel girders, jumping over barrels and gaps, pulling up bolts, and smashing barrels and fireballs with hammers, all in an effort to rescue Pauline. Also released for the Atari 2600 and Intellivision. Remade for the Game Boy.

Donkey Kong Classics

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Donkey Kong Classics contains two previously released NES titles in one cartridge: *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Jr.*

Donkey Kong Jr.

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

Unlike *Donkey Kong* for the NES, *Donkey Kong Jr.* includes all four looping screens from its respective coin-op classic (Nintendo's *Donkey Kong Junior*, 1982). Players guide the titular boy ape as he attempts to rescue his father from Mario's cage at the top of each screen. This requires climbing up and sliding down

vines, pushing keys up chains, dropping fruit on (or avoiding altogether) nitpicker birds and snapjaws, and jumping on platforms and over gaps. As with *Donkey Kong*, the animated intermissions found in the coin-op version are absent. Both games, *DK* and *DK Jr.*, are great fun. When compared to the Atari 7800 game, the NES version has tighter controls, better graphics (the 7800 game looks a little blocky), and vastly superior sounds. Also released for the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and ColecoVision.

Donkey Kong Jr. Math

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Educational/Math, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1985.

An offshoot of *Donkey Kong Junior* (arcade, 1982), *Donkey Kong Jr. Math* uses the basic climbing elements of *DKJ* to drill gamers ages eight and up on addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Calculate A and Calculate B are two-player games, with each contestant guiding a junior Kong (one brown, one pink) up and down vines and on top of small islands in order to form equations. The objective is to reach the number depicted on a sign that Papa (Donkey Kong) is holding at the top of the screen. Gamers can play solo, but there's no real way to lose unless there's an opponent. A one-player affair, $+ - \times \div$ Exercise has gamers climbing up chains to select the correct numbers to solve math problems, with a Nitpicker Bird showing the position of the number to be filled. Though good for exercising mental math muscles, this cartridge is light on action as there are no enemies to avoid.

Donkey Kong 3

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

A stellar port of Nintendo's vastly underrated arcade game (1983), *Donkey Kong 3* strays from the climbing genre popularized by *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Junior*, opting instead for a shooter format somewhat similar to *Gorf*, *Centipede*, and *Galaga*. Stanley the Bugman, who first appeared in *Greenhouse* (a Nintendo Game & Watch title from 1982), runs

and jumps around the bottom of the platform-enhanced playfield, firing upward at bees, butterflies, and other critters, and at Donkey Kong himself, who slowly makes his way down a pair of vines. Fast, fun, and frantic, *DK3* is a bug-shooting blast. While technically the last game in the original *Donkey Kong* trilogy, *Donkey Kong 3* was followed by numerous games in the DK franchise, including such titles as *Donkey Kong 64* (Nintendo 64), the *Donkey Kong Country* trilogy (SNES), *Donkey Kong Land* (Game Boy), and *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat* (GameCube).

Double Dare

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Double Dare for the NES is based on the kids' game show (hosted by Marc Summers), which began airing on Nickelodeon in 1986 and had numerous spin-offs, including *Family Double Dare* and *Double Dare 2000*. The format follows the TV program pretty well, with gamers answering trivia questions and competing in three types of challenges: Toss-up (bowling, golf, hungry clowns, and gorilla), Physical (cake catch, putty golf, ring toss, and the like), and Obstacle Course, the latter of which is played by the winner of the most money at the end of round two. Fans of the show will enjoy the game, but the Toss-up challenges can be somewhat frustrating, since each one requires players to set the speed and angle of an item prior to throwing it.

Double Dragon

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Technos. Side-Scrolling Combat/Fighting, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1988.

Although it contains just four short levels (City Slum, Industrial Area, Forest, and Hideout of the Boss), *Double Dragon* is a terrific brawler that is fun to play time and again. Gamers guide street tough Billy Lee as he punches and kicks ferocious karate masters, whip-wielding women, oil drum-throwing bad guys, and other enemies. He must also dodge falling stalactites, jump across the occasional gap, and even do a little climbing. Throughout

the game, new fighting techniques will be added to Billy's arsenal, including over-shoulder throws, spin kicks, pin attacks, and the ever-popular hair-pull kicks. In addition, Billy can pick up such dropped weapons as dynamite, knives, bats, and whips, and he can throw rocks and boxes. The cartridge is missing the standard two-player simultaneous mode from Taito's groundbreaking coin-op classic from 1987 (something the Master System and Atari 7800 versions retain), and certain levels have been redesigned, but the game does add an option in which players can fight as one of six different characters: Billy, Williams, Rowper, Linda, Chintai, or Abobo. Also released for the Game Boy, Genesis, and various other systems.

Double Dragon II: The Revenge

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Technos. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

As with *Double Dragon*, *Double Dragon II* for the NES is not a note-for-note port of its respective coin-op counterpart (Technos released *Double Dragon II* to the arcades in 1988). Many of the same elements are present, and the basic action remains intact, but the levels have been redesigned, and cut scenes were added. In a quest for vengeance against the Shadow Warriors, Billy and Jimmy Lee must battle street gangs, nunchaku-toting ninjas, giant mutant warriors, and other enemies through nine missions: Into the Turf, At the Heliport, Battle in the Chopper, Undersea Base, Forest of Death, Mansion of Terror, Trap Room, Double Illusion, and Final Confrontation. In addition to a variety of punches and kicks (including such new moves as spinning cyclone, hyper uppercut, and high jump kick), Billy and Jimmy can use weapons dropped by the enemies. Thankfully, the two-player action remains intact, including a special mode where Billy and Jimmy can hit one another as they progress through the levels. Much different than *Double Dragon II* for the Game Boy.

Double Dragon III: The Sacred Stones

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Technos. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

In *Double Dragon III*, players must retrieve three sacred stones, which are used as ransom to rescue the mysteriously revived Marion, who was thought dead in *Double Dragon II*. Joining Billy and Jimmy Lee (each equipped with nunchaku) as playable characters are Chin Seimei (equipped with an iron claw) and Yogyu Ranzou (equipped with a ninja blade and shurikens), who become selectable after players defeat them in boss-like battles. Weapon pick-ups this time out include army knives, broken bottles, and sais, and players can pull off such fighting moves as round house jump kicks, cyclone spin kicks, leaping double-kicks, diving head butts, lunging knee drops, and mid-air somer-assaults. Enemies to fight through the game's five missions (U.S.A., China, Japan, Italy, and Egypt) include street thugs, Ninja warriors, Manchurian barbarians, and other bad guys. Loosely based on the coin-op classic *Double Dragon 3: The Rosetta Stone* (Technos, 1990), which included a three-player mode and shops for purchasing items. Followed by: *Super Double Dragon* (SNES), *Double Dragon Advance* (Game Boy Advance), and *Double Dragon V: The Shadow Falls* (SNES, Genesis, Atari Jaguar).

Double Dribble

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Although the original arcade version (Konami, 1986) has more colorful graphics and a more detailed crowd, *Double Dribble* for the NES is a highly entertaining, hugely influential console classic. The side-scrolling, five-on-five action is memorable for its ease of play, its arcade-style sensibilities, and its high flying dunks, which are presented via large animated cut scenes. The game also includes steals, three-pointers, four period lengths, three difficulty levels, a nicely illustrated halftime show, a solid rendition of the "National Anthem," and more. The elevated view of the action is from the side, and the screen scrolls horizontally to show the entire court. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *Double Dribble: The Playoff Edition* (Genesis).

Double Strike

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Sachen. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

In *Double Strike*, players pilot a small, cartoonish airplane called a Thrasher Hawk-7 through nine pastel colored rounds of sky, jungle, and ocean, shooting bullets at such ordinary (in appearance and behavior) enemies as planes, boats, tanks, and helicopters. The airborne action moves to the right at a constant pace, and the shooting is fairly steady (if cheaply produced). Power-ups to grab include double shot, triple shot, eight shot (spread fire), bombs, invincible, and extra lives. A second player can join in to help the cause. Unlicensed.

Dragon Fighter

PUBLISHER: Sofel. DEVELOPER: Natsume. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

A solid action game, *Dragon Fighter* puts players in the role of a running, jumping, crouching hero who looks like Robin Hood and uses a sword to fend off ogres, snowballs, maggots, flies, spiders, mechanical beasts, fish, mermen, flying skulls, and other enemies and obstacles. Destroying baddies charges up a meter, allowing players to morph into a dragon, which basically (and briefly) turns the game into a side-scrolling shooter. Grabbing color-coded orbs offers such power-ups as replenished health, the destruction of all on-screen enemies, or the ability to fire projectiles, napalm, spread shots, or heat seekers. *Dragon Fighter* has six levels, including a living cave, an icy field, a water palace, a factory, a castle of the undead, and a tainted sky, the latter of which is all dragon all the time.

Dragon Power

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Over-head View Action, 1 player. 1988.

An Americanized take on *Dragon Ball* (a popular Japanese anime/manga franchise), *Dragon Power* puts players on a quest to find seven crystal balls. Gameplay consists of guiding a kung fu-type character named Goku around caves, grassy plains, mountains (flat

though they are), and other areas, punching bad guys or jumping to attack them. Goku can acquire wind waves and a magic pole, the latter of which has twice the power and a longer range than punches. Goku can also eat sandwiches to run faster and ride on swift clouds to fly to the end of scenes. Boss battles offer a side-view perspective, and numerous cutscenes find Goku conversing with pals. Unfortunately, bland graphics, tepid fighting, and unconvincing character movement (Goku appears to be sliding along) ruin the experience.

Dragon Spirit: The New Legend

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Namco. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Dragon Spirit: The New Legend captures the spirit of Namco's 1987 arcade game (which was simply called *Dragon Spirit*), but it does feature some differences. In both games, players fly a dragon over volcanoes, jungles, glaciers, and other areas, shooting airborne enemies and bombing ground targets (ala *Xevious*). Shooting certain enemies and bombing eggs releases items to power-up the dragon with multiple heads, wider dragon-fire shots, power wings (for invincibility), and earthquakes (which destroy all ground-based enemies). The NES version adds dual dragons, which is one small dragon on either side of the main dragon. The NES game also includes a short introductory level (culminating in a battle against the demon Zawel) that determines the game mode: Blue Dragon or Gold Dragon, the latter of which is easier, but only lets gamers play five of the game's nine levels. A by-the-numbers port of *Dragon Spirit* was released for the TurboGrafx-16. Followed by: *Dragon Saber* (arcade, 1990).

Dragon Warrior

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Enix. Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1989.

Released the year after *Phantasy Star* (SMS) and the year before *Final Fantasy* (NES), *Dragon Warrior* seems dated now, but, with its top-down perspective, Japanese heritage, and mainstream acceptance (free cartridges were

available via *Nintendo Power*), the game was a huge influence on subsequent console RPGs. Cast in the role of a descendant of a hero named Erdrick, players must rescue a princess and recover balls of light stolen by the evil Dragonlord. This involves performing magic spells, exploring maze-like towns (accessed via a world map) and dungeons, battling monsters via turn-based battles, leveling up your character, acquiring gold for purchasing such items as swords and armor, and much more. To initiate an action, players must access a menu and select from such commands as fight, run, talk, stairs, door, search, and take. Includes battery backup. Also released for the Game Boy Color (via *Dragon Warrior I & II*).

Dragon Warrior II

PUBLISHER: Enix. DEVELOPER: Enix. Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

Set 100 years after the first game, *Dragon Warrior II* finds Moonbrooke Castle under attack by the evil Hargon the Sorcerer, who aims to rule the world by calling on the "ill-omened gods from the dark." To save the day, players must journey through a world (towns, castles, plains, deserts, mountains, swamps, caves, seas, and forests) four times as large as that found in the original *Dragon Warrior*. Gameplay is similar to *Dragon Warrior*, but with several new features, including more spells and items, sailboat navigation, battles against groups of monsters (as opposed to nothing but one-on-one fights), and three playable characters: the Prince of Midenhall (uses weapons and wears armor, but cannot do magic); the Princess of Moonbroke (uses magic, but not armor or weapons); and the Prince of Cannock (an amalgamation of Midenhall and Moonbroke). Includes battery backup. Also released for the Game Boy Color (via *Dragon Warrior I & II*).

Dragon Warrior III

PUBLISHER: Enix. DEVELOPER: Enix. Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1992.

As in the first two games in the series, *Dragon Warrior III* has players exploring towns, dungeons, and castles, and battling monsters to level up their characters and add to their arsenal.

However, the game has more detailed graphics, better sound, more weapons, armor, and magic spells, and a more intricate storyline. In addition, players can recruit three characters to their party from eight different classes: hero, soldier, pilgrim, wizard, fighter, merchant, sage, and goof-off. A nifty job system enables the changing of character classes in mid-game, letting players create powerful combo characters. Other flourishes include: day and nighttime travel, the ability to gamble on monster battles at fight rings, and more than 40 castles, towns, villages, and shrines to visit. Includes battery backup.

Dragon Warrior IV

PUBLISHER: Enix. DEVELOPER: Enix. Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1992.

Boasting 59 spells, 36 weapons, 44 types of armor, and five separate chapters, *Dragon Warrior IV* is more epic in nature than the previous games in the series. Gameplay is similar, however, with players engaging in turn-based battles, exploring towns and dungeons, talking to citizens to garner clues, using gold to purchase weapons and items, selecting commands from a menu (a process that does get tedious), and more. There are now nine characters in the party, and a special tactics system lets players set the characters' positions and strategies for battle. Visually, the game evokes *Dragon Warrior III*, but the music is more diverse as each chapter has its own distinct set of tunes. Followed by: *Dragon Warrior VII* (PlayStation) and *Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King* (PS2). (The series is known as *Dragon Quest* in Japan, but *Dragon Quest V* and *Dragon Quest VI* were not released in the U.S.)

Dragon's Lair

PUBLISHER: CSG Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Movie-time Limited. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

Based on Cinematronics' laser disc arcade game (1983), which was basically an interactive cartoon, *Dragon's Lair* for the NES takes the more conventional side-scrolling approach, but keeps a primary aspect of the original game intact: that of having to memorize and make

the right moves at exactly the right times. To rescue Princess Daphne, Dirk the Daring must use axes, candles, fireballs, daggers, and physical skills (crawling, jumping, and the like) to make it through bats, trolls, snakes, collapsing floors, descending gates, and other enemies and obstacles. Levels include: Drawbridge, Entrance Hall, Treasury, Elevator Shaft, Gold Mines, Hall of the Grim Reaper, and Singe's Cavern. The game looks great, but will frustrate impatient action fans. Side-scrolling versions of *Dragon's Lair* were also released for the Game Boy and SNES.

Duck Hunt

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Light Gun Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1985.

Although repetitive and mindless, *Duck Hunt* is a key game in the NES library. Not only was it a system launch title, it was a pack-in cartridge with the NES Deluxe Set. Players grasp a Nintendo Zapper gun, take aim at the screen, and fire away at flying ducks or clay pigeons. Backgrounds consist of simple grass, hills, and trees. A second player can use the control pad to guide the ducks vertically and horizontally, but they will wish they could shoot the famously annoying dog (which they can do in the 1984 arcade version, which was part of Nintendo's Vs. series).

DuckTales

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

Based on Disney's cartoon series starring Scrooge McDuck and his grandnephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie, *DuckTales* for the NES is a fine game in which players guide Scrooge on a treasure hunting adventure through five levels of platforming action: the Amazon, the Himalayas, Transylvania, African Mines, and the Moon. To open treasure chests, make long jumps, and defeat gorillas, natives, spiders, and other enemies (including boss Magica DeSpell), Scrooge is equipped with an unconventional weapon: a walking cane that performs a golf swing attack and a pogo-jumping maneuver. Cute graphics and theme music and the in-

clusion of Bubba, Gizmoduck, and other helpful friends add to the fun. Also released for the Game Boy.

DuckTales 2

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Released four years after the original game, *DuckTales 2* is similar to its progenitor (which is a good thing, since *DuckTales* was excellent), but with a few new uses for Scrooge McDuck's walking cane weapon, such as pulling blocks and grabbing onto latches. Players assume the role of Disney's greedy, treasure-hunting duck as he runs, climbs, and pogo jumps through five levels of play: Niagara, Bermuda, Mu, Scotland, and Egypt. There are obstacles to avoid (spikes, fireballs, logs, and the like), rafts to ride, bosses to fight (including Fire Duck and Mummy Duck), items to purchase (such as continues and health), and much more. Produced in the waning years of the NES, *DuckTales 2* is one of the better sequels for the system. Also released for the Game Boy.

Dudes with Attitude

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment.
DEVELOPER: American Video Entertainment.
Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Dudes with Attitude is a simple game in which players guide one of six different bouncing smiley faces around 32 different screens, bumping into diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other treasures in order to collect them. Passing through an attitude converter changes the face into one of six different colors, and only treasures the color of the smiley face will be collected when touched. Obstacles include mines, walls, serpent sentries, star-a-lizers, and jaws. An edit mode lets gamers design their own levels. Includes password feature. See also: *Trolls on Treasure Island* (NES).

Dungeon Magic: Sword of the Elements

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Natsume. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

In *Dungeon Magic*, players assume the role of a brave adventurer searching for the Sword of Tores, the only weapon powerful enough to

defeat Darces the Overlord. As in many RPGs, battling evil creatures increases the player's experience, which in turn increases ability and strength. Many monsters and magicians carry gold, which can be used to purchase weapons, armor, healing potions, magic powders, and other helpful items. Throughout the course of the hours-long adventure, players will cast magic spells, visit merchants, use keys to open doors and treasure chests, and search caves, dungeons, mazes, and towns. Graph paper is recommended for keeping track of various locations and items. Includes battery backup. Similar to: *Wizardry* (NES).

Dusty Diamond's All-Star Softball

PUBLISHER: Broderbund Software. DEVELOPER: Tonkin House. Sports/Softball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

This quirky, arcade-style game lets players select from 60 different oddly designed, big-headed softball players (including a punk, a witch, and a devil), some of which have unorthodox bats (such as a broom or a pickaxe) and/or skills (such as flying or climbing fences). There are fast and slow pitch games and six different ball fields (Sandlot, Park, Cliff, School, Island, and Professional), most of which are littered by such obstacles as rocks, posts, sand, and/or water. The game also includes pinch runners, pinch hitters, steals (fast pitch only), and diving catches. Easy to control and fun to play, *Dusty Diamond's* is a cult classic.

Dynowarz: The Destruction of Spondylus

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

In *Dynowarz*, the manmade Spondylus Solar System is under attack, and it is up to the player, as Professor Proteus, to vanquish this threat. Armed with a spread fire gun, the professor must battle robotic dinosaurs (some of which fly), hop on vertically and horizontally moving platforms, jump over chasms, and dodge spikes, mines, and cannons. Periodically, control will switch to a Mechagodzilla-like dinosaur that can punch, launch fist projectiles, lob bombs (which, annoyingly enough, oftentimes

go right over enemies), and shoot fireballs and lasers. The dino stages are less platform intensive, but both phases are easy, thanks to a long energy bar that makes it possible to just trample over spikes and through enemies without worrying too much about taking damage. Sparse backgrounds, delayed jumping (the characters squat first), and short levels add to the game's ineptitude.

8 Eyes

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: Seta. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

8 Eyes looks and plays a lot like *Castlevania*, but is much harder and has a less interesting lead character. Players guide Orin the Falconer through eight castles, using swords and a variety of special weapons (daggers, boomerangs, Molotov cocktails, and the like) to defeat soldiers, living skeletons, giant wasps, mud men, and other creatures. Unfortunately, there is no *Castlevania*-like whip, but Orin can whip out Cutrus the fighting falcon, which can be controlled by a second player. Levels must be finished in the correct order (each boss is only

vulnerable to one type of sword), and levers and buttons must sometimes be used to open doors, giving the game some degree of depth.

Elevator Action

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Platform Shooter/Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Elevator Action is a fantastic port of Taito's 1983 arcade game. The color scheme is slightly different, and the music is a notch or two below in terms of quality, but the graphics and gameplay are virtually identical. Players guide super-sleuth Agent 17 up and down elevators and escalators and across floors, shooting and jump-kicking armed security guards. For extra points, players can shoot lamps to darken rooms. The goal is to pick up all the files hidden behind the red doors and make it to the getaway car in the garage below. Also released for the Atari 2600 (as a playable prototype distributed at the 2001 Classic Gaming Expo) and the Game Boy.

Eliminator Boat Duel

PUBLISHER: Electro Brain. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software/Radioactive Software. Boat/Watercraft Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

In the overhead view segments of *Eliminator Boat Duel*, players race up twisting, turning rivers, dodging or jumping over such obstacles as alligators, sharks, and whirlpools while rescuing people and grabbing nitro boosts and cash. In addition to jumping over obstacles, the boats can jump on each other (a maneuver obviously inspired by *Bump 'n' Jump*). When the action switches to the faster, less cluttered, behind-the-boat perspective, players race atop open waters, trying to stay between pairs of flags while grabbing speed boosts and jumping the occasional ramp. Between races, prize money can be used to make repairs and upgrade boats



Seven NES games, each based on an arcade classic: *Elevator Action*, *Rolling Thunder*, *1943*, *Karate Champ*, *BurgerTime*, *Gradius*, and *Xenophobe*.

with faster engines, sturdier hulls, and improved steering. Despite a limited color palette, the game has very nicely detailed graphics.

Excitebike

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Motorcycle Racing, 1 player. 1985.

A favorite among early NES owners (despite the exclusion of the bonus rounds from Nintendo's 1984 arcade original), *Excitebike* is a side-scrolling motocross game in which players race against the clock over tracks containing hills, ramps, obstacles, and mud pits. Keys to the game include using the turbo button judiciously (without overheating the bike) and, during jumps (which are wildly enjoyable to pull off), positioning the bike at the most effective angles for distance and smooth landings. A special Design Mode lets gamers create their own courses. The manual states that "the save and load menu options are not operable in this game," meaning players cannot save the courses they have created. Also released for the Game Boy Advance. Followed by: *Excitebike 64* (Nintendo 64).

Exodus: Journey to the Promised Land

PUBLISHER: Wisdom Tree. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Maze/Maze Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

Exodus uses the same game engine as *Crystal Mines*, but is retrofitted with a biblical theme. Players guide Moses as he explores 100 mazes, using his staff and the "word of God" (a firing mechanism) to ward off magicians, soldiers, taskmasters, and other enemies and to remove such obstacles as the murmurings of Israel, the weaknesses of man, and the golden calf of sin. To complete a level, Moses must grab five question marks and the manna quota. Holy oil, new sandals, Bibles (which gamers earn by answering questions), and other items aid Moses in his quest. There are 250 trivia questions, all based on the book of *Exodus*. Unlicensed. See also: *Joshua and The Battle of Jericho* (NES).

F-15 City War

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment.

DEVELOPER: Sachen. Third-Person Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

F-15 City War alternates between two perspectives: behind the titular plane, which doesn't actually look like an F-15; and above it, where the action slows to a crawl. Gameplay is arcade-style in nature, with pilots using an unlimited supply of machine gun bullets and missiles to blow away jets, tanks, gun boats, choppers, and giant robots. As the action begins, players pilot their plane over a city street, with repetitious buildings choppy scrolling by (the frame rate is horrendous), giving the game a cheap, primitive look from the outset. Other than 1-ups, there are no power-ups, and all five stages of the game are decidedly dull. Bosses vary in appearance, but are defeated by mindless button-mashing. Unlicensed.

F-15 Strike Eagle

PUBLISHER: MicroProse Software. DEVELOPER: MicroProse Software. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

F-15 Strike Eagle straps players into the cockpit of a jet fighter capable of loops, rolls, and high-speed turns. There are seven levels to conquer, including missions in Libya, Basra, and Baghdad. Gameplay consists of: shooting missiles and bullets at enemy fighters; dodging enemy fire; monitoring altitude, speed, and radar; destroying chemical weapons plants; and more. The top half of the screen shows the action while the bottom half displays gauges, maps, and the like. Compared to the original computer game (1985), the NES rendition has more colors and better graphics (enemies in the original are wire-frame constructs), but the computer version has better, more responsive controls (thanks in part to keyboard input). Includes digitized voice effects. Followed by: *F-15 Strike Eagle II* (Genesis) and *Super Strike Eagle* (SNES).

F-117A Stealth Fighter

PUBLISHER: MicroProse. DEVELOPER: MicroProse. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

A port of the PC game *Night Hawk: F-117A Stealth Fighter 2.0* (which was a sequel to *F-19*

Stealth Fighter), *F-117A Stealth Fighter* for the NES sends players on six air-to-air and air-to-ground missions—Libya, Middle East, Gulf War, Cuba, Korea, and North Cape—plus some highly classified missions. The top half of the playfield is the view screen while the bottom half is a busy instrument panel depicting a text message screen, a compass, a fuel gauge, a speed indicator, a digital altitude display, a stealthometer, missile warnings, and various other things for the player to keep track of. Clearly, this is a complex challenge, with players locking onto targets, firing a 20 mm Vulcan cannon, launching missiles, releasing decoys, engaging an autopilot, bailing out of the plane, landing back at the base, and much more.

Family Feud

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Game Show, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Based on the long-running TV game show, *Family Feud* pits two families of five against one another, with the goal of winning \$20,000. The computer asks survey questions (such as “name a brand of camera”), and players must buzz in to guess the most popular answers (derived from a survey of 100 people). If three incorrect answers are guessed, the opposing team gets a chance to steal that family’s money. As in the television program, there are Fast Money Rounds and a lady-kissing host (unnamed in this case). Also released for the Genesis, SNES, and numerous other systems.

The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure Puzzle, 1 player. 1991.

Dizzy is an egg-shaped adventurer who must rescue his girlfriend Daisy from the evil wizard Zaks, who has taken the damsel in distress to his castle in the clouds. Retrieving her requires finding 100 magic stars scattered throughout the game’s cartoon-like lands, which are filled with leprechauns, trolls, magicians, and other strange creatures. Areas to

explore include villages, forests, diamond mines, a dragon’s lair, a pirate ship, and more. During his quest, Dizzy will run, jump, swim, ride a mine cart, talk to characters, use a rope to swing across chasms, participate in mini-games, and pick up and use objects to solve puzzles, such as keys to unlock doors and a plank of wood to build a bridge over a spiky pit. Released on the Genesis as *Fantastic Dizzy*. Followed by: *Dizzy the Adventurer* (NES) and *Spindizzy Worlds* (SNES). Unlicensed.

The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy (Aladdin Version)

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure Puzzle, 1 player. 1993.

The Aladdin compact cartridge rendition of *The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy* is almost identical to the standard version, but for the following differences: 250 stars to find (up from 100); a simplified inventory system; certain items in different places; and some minor terrain alterations and level modifications. Also, Dizzy walks faster, and the word “Dizzy” on the title screen has been changed from blue to red. Requires the Aladdin Deck Enhancer. Unlicensed.

Fantasy Zone

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Like *Defender*, *Fantasy Zone* has players flying a ship left and right around a wrap-around world, firing away at airborne enemies. However, unlike the stark, darkly light *Defender*, *Fantasy Zone* takes place on eight pastel-colored planets, each filled with cute characters and charming music. In addition to firing at an assortment of quirky creatures, players can collect coins for use in purchasing speed power-ups, laser beams, wide beams, twin bombs, smart bombs, fire bombs, and heavy bombs. Unlike the original arcade game (Sega, 1985) and the Master System version, the NES rendition does not feature 7-way shots (though it does compensate somewhat with 5-way shots). In the NES game’s favor, the screen scrolls up and down a little, and there’s a radar

showing how many bases are left to destroy in the current world. Both of these features are missing from the Master System version (though between the two the Master System game remains the superior port). Unlicensed. Also released for the TurboGrafx-16.

Faria: A World of Mystery & Danger!

PUBLISHER: Nexoft. DEVELOPER: Game Arts/Hi-Score. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

Like many action-oriented RPGs, *Faria* borrows heavily from *The Legend of Zelda*. Players explore forests, towns, puzzle-filled dungeons, and maze-like towers, with the time-worn objective being to rescue the proverbial princess. To battle the various monsters that inhabit the land, adventurers can use nine different swords, plus five types of bows: wood, bamboo, iron, steel, and cross. Other helpful items include armor, shields, wings (for traveling to previous townships), a flashlight, bombs, magic glasses, magic rope, and more. As play progresses, gamers can increase their hit points, striking power, defensive power, and fighting experience. The challenge and complexity of *Faria* will please most fans of the genre. Includes battery backup.

Faxanadu

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

The elf town of Elois is under attack by meteorites and monsters, and it is up to the player to journey through towns, fields, and dungeons, battling monsters to gain experience, ultimately confronting the Evil One in his fortress. By visiting shops, the hero can purchase swords, shields, hints, keys, and armor. He can also use magic (deluge, fire, thunder, death, and tilt) and a variety of items, including a ruby ring (for moving rocks), wing boots (for flying), and a mattock (for destroying walls). Platforming action comes in the way of jumping, climbing ladders, and a side-view perspective. Includes password feature.

Felix the Cat

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

On a quest to rescue his girlfriend from the evil Professor, Felix, the famous cartoon cat, must run, jump, swim, drive, and fly his way through nine areas of play (including a prehistoric world, the North Pole, and the Moon), using his vaunted magic bag of tricks to thwart dinosaurs, bats, fish, Rock Bottom, Poindexter, and other enemies and obstacles. Magic items include a punching glove, Frisbees, an airplane, a submarine, a spaceship, and more. Like the *Kirby* and *Mario* platformers, *Felix the Cat* offers cute, cartoon-like graphics, nice animation, smooth controls, and a rollicking good time. Best of all, the game stays true to the spirit of the Felix franchise. Also released for the Game Boy.

Ferrari Grand Prix Challenge

PUBLISHER: Acclaim Entertainment. DEVELOPER: System 3 Software. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 player. 1992.

Viewed from behind the player's car, *Ferrari Grand Prix Challenge* has gamers racing against 24 cars and 8 teams on 16 twisting, turning tracks. The playfield takes up the top two-thirds of the screen while the bottom one-third shows the dash board displaying speed, gear (players can select from automatic or three-speed transmission), revs, lap number, lap time, position, radio (which gives such warnings as oil on the track), rear view mirror, and course map. Signs along the way keep players advised of forthcoming turns and overhead view pit stops, in which players furiously push buttons to make the pit crew change tires as fast as possible. Background graphics include mountains and buildings, but roadside scenery is sparse, depicting redundant gray and green striped grass. The Genesis version features a customizable car, two-player split-screen action, and selectable road and weather conditions. Also released for the Game Boy.

Fester's Quest

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

In this largely humorless *Addams Family* spin-off, the bald, but bold Uncle Fester travels streets and sewers, rescuing townsfolk from aliens and battling bosses to gather clues. During his quest, he will enter seven houses (each containing an Addams family member) and six labyrinthine buildings. To ward off globules, hovering aliens, slime replicators, giant scorpions, and other enemies (which appeared during a recent alien invasion), Fester can brandish a gun, a whip, TNT, and missiles. Other useable items include bulbs (for seeing underground), keys (for entering buildings), money (for buying hotdogs), and a noose, the latter of which makes Lurch appear and kill all on-screen enemies. Two viewpoints are featured: overhead and first-person maze. There's lots of shooting, so the manual recommends playing the game with a turbo/rapid-fire joystick.

Final Fantasy

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Square.
Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player.
1990.

Along with *Phantasy Star* (SMS, 1988) and *Dragon Warrior* (NES, 1989), *Final Fantasy* helped popularize console role-playing games in the United States. In this game, players create a party of four adventures (called Light Warriors) from six different character classes: fighter, black belt, thief, red mage, white mage, and black mage, each of whom can mature into an adult over time, and each of whom has different strengths and weaknesses. For example, unlike the fighter, whose specialty is wielding weapons and armor, the black mage excels at casting powerful magic spells. Gameplay consists of exploring a huge world (including towns, castles, forests, and caves), talking to characters to garner clues, setting sail on the ocean, opening treasure boxes, and much more. Random, turn-based battles frequently occur, with players selecting from a menu of such options as fight, run, magic, drink, and item. During battles, the overhead perspective switches to side-view. Includes battery backup. Followed by: *Final Fantasy II* (SNES), *Final Fantasy III* (SNES), and numerous other sequels and offshoots (including a PSP remake).

Fire 'n Ice

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Maze Puzzle/Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

The follow-up to *Solomon's Key* (NES) and *Solomon's Club* (Game Boy), *Fire 'n Ice* remains a deviously difficult puzzler, but changes the formula enough to keep things interesting. On a mission to protect Coolmint Island, the wizard Dana, who can no longer jump or shoot fireballs, must create, push, climb, and destroy ice blocks to extinguish flames in 15 worlds, each containing 10 rooms. Every 10th room of a world is a boss level, adding monsters, ghosts, and other enemies to the action. Enemies vary in abilities, such as those holding umbrellas cannot be destroyed by an ice block falling from above. As in *Solomon's Club*, gamers can play through the worlds in virtually any order. In addition, a special Edit Mode lets gamers design and play their own rooms. The lack of battery back-up means players cannot save their creations, but a password feature does enable players to save their progress through the standard game.

Firehawk

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

The helicopter gunship players pilot in *Firehawk* moves fast and can shoot bullets, launch bombs, rotate, and fly in all directions. Throughout the game, players can acquire extra shields, ammo, and fuel and can power-up the helicopter with faster firing, faster maneuvering speed, bigger bullets, and triple firing. There are seven missions, each of which has players destroying military targets (runways, tank hangers, heli landing pads and the like) and rescuing paratroopers, the latter of which are found by following a moving arrow. Once a paratrooper has been located, the action switches to behind the helicopter, where heat-seeking sights will automatically track and lock onto enemy choppers moving across the screen. Players must time their shoots accordingly to destroy the enemy choppers and give the paratrooper time to climb up a rope ladder and safely into the helicopter. Unlicensed.

Fisher-Price: Firehouse Rescue

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Imagineer-ing. Maze/Action, 1 player. 1992.

Fisher-Price: Firehouse Rescue features two types of extremely basic gameplay. During the first part of each level, the action is viewed from overhead, and players must drive a fire truck around a maze of streets and to a house. Once the truck reaches the house, a side-view is shown, with players rescuing (with a fire truck ladder) Fisher Price toy people trapped in the upper level of said house. There are no enemies or obstacles to speak of, and there's no actual representation of fire (this is a kids' game, after all), but harder difficulty levels do introduce side-scrolling mazes and keys to find before reaching houses. The tune "Barnum and Bailey's Favorite" plays during the title screen.

Fisher-Price: I Can Remember

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Board Game, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Designed for children ages three to eight, *Fisher Price: I Can Remember* is essentially an electronic version of *Concentration*, the classic memory game. From a playfield consisting of 12, 16, or 20 boxes (depending on the skill level), players take turns flipping boxes two at a time, with the objective being to create matches. Each box contains a small toy, such as a roller skate or a drum, and completing the entire board reveals a large Fisher Price toy or grouping of toys. The graphics are flat, blocky, static images, and such standards as "Old MacDonald" and "Mary Had a Little Lamb" play in loops. Similar to *Hunt & Score* for the Atari 2600, but the Atari game actually offers a 32-square board.

Fisher-Price: Perfect Fit

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

In *Perfect Fit*, Fisher Price toys drop down, one at a time, out of a chute on the left side of the

screen. Players must maneuver each toy onto the playfield and over a matching shadow of that toy. If the object is not placed properly, or it is placed over the shadow of a different toy, a buzz will sound, letting gamers know of their error. In more challenging levels, players must flip the images and work against a time limit. The game is designed to help children ages three to six develop object recognition and eye-hand coordination, but boredom can set in after repeated play. The action is complemented by such traditional favorites as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

Fist of the North Star

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: Shouei System. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1989.

In *Fist of the North Star*, a karate expert named Ken walks (stiffly and awkwardly), punches, kicks, crouches, and jumps (on brick platforms, over gaps, and up stairs) his way through eight boring levels of bad guys who are capable of a variety of attacks, including fireballs, sliding kicks, clenching claws, and white light bombs. When killed, enemies explode or fly off the screen. Defeating certain enemies increases Ken's strength or, in the case of besting 20 baddies, charges him up for a special shooting attack. Power-up items include flags for regaining energy, a silver necklace for restoring shooting power, and a gold necklace for using Gento Karate (transparency/invincibility). *Fist of the North Star* is based on the anime and manga series, which was originally serialized



Like most consoles, the NES is no stranger to children's educational titles. Pictured are *Fisher Price: Perfect Fit*, *Donkey Kong Jr. Math*, and *Sesame Street ABC*.

in Japan (as *Hokuto no Ken*) in the weekly magazine, *Shonen Jump*.

Flight of the Intruder

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Imagi-neering. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1991.

Set during the Vietnam War, *Flight of the Intruder* for the NES is based on the 1990 feature film, and on the 1990 computer game. Faced with 12 missions, players can fly two planes: the F-14 Phantom all-weather interceptor, which fires at North Vietnamese MiG 21 jets; and the A-6 Intruder all-weather carrier-based strike bomber, which destroys ground and sea targets while avoiding flak and ground-to-air missiles. Viewpoints include cockpit, map, and bombing/strafing, the latter of which is from behind the plane. While landing, players must consider thrust, altitude, vertical velocity, and range, along with the lowering of the landing gear and arrestor hook.

The Flintstones: The Rescue of Dino & Hoppy

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

A time-traveler from the 30th century has kidnapped Dino the dinosaur and Hoppy the hopposaurus. To rescue his beloved pets, Fred Flintstone must help Gazoo rebuild the friendly alien's time machine. The result of this confluence of events is a standard, yet fun and colorful platformer. Players guide a nicely animated Fred as he runs, jumps, and climbs through jungles, the town of Bedrock, an ice village, dungeons, and other areas, clubbing criminals, prehistoric animals, and barrels, the latter of which release such helpful items as coins for using a slingshot, an axe, and boomasaurus egg bombs. Periodically, Fred will play a simple one-on-one basketball game where he can win the ability to fly, swim, and jump long distances.

The Flintstones: The Surprise at Dinosaur Peak!

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

The second *Flintstones* game for the NES, *The Surprise at Dinosaur Peak!* is much harder to find than *The Rescue of Dino & Hoppy*, but it's just as fun. At any time, players can select between Fred and Barney, which is important for getting past certain areas. Both characters can run, jump, and use items (bowling balls, stone hammers, and the like), but Fred scales cliffs while Barney climbs poles, ropes, and vines. Also, Fred wields a club while Barney carries a sling. There are 12 levels of play, with activities ranging from using crocodiles as trampolines to battling dinosaurs to using Pterodactyls to fly over gaps to riding in mine carts to playing prehistoric hardball. The objective is to rescue Pebbles and Bam-Bam. Fans of the *Flintstones* animated series, which originally ran on ABC during prime time from 1960 to 1966, will especially enjoy the game's cartoon-like graphics and nicely recreated theme song.

Flying Dragon: The Secret Scroll

PUBLISHER: Culture Brain. DEVELOPER: Culture Brain. Side-Scrolling Combat/Fighting, 1 player. 1989.

Despite poor controls, *Flying Dragon* boasts an interesting mixture of genres. It offers side-scrolling combat/platforming action, with players punching and kicking ninjas and jumping over obstacles. However, much of the game consists of one-on-one fights, with the added twist of having to hit certain areas of the opponent's body marked by red symbols. Opponents consist of a boxer, a kickboxer, a wrestler, and karate, kung-fu, and martial arts experts. RPG-style power-ups include increased punching, kicking, and jumping abilities, plus keys for opening doors and cosmic saucers for throwing at enemies. Includes password feature. Followed by: *Flying Warriors* (NES).

Flying Warriors

PUBLISHER: Culture Brain. DEVELOPER: Culture Brain. Side-Scrolling Combat/Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

The sequel to *Flying Dragon: The Secret Scroll*, *Flying Warriors* offers the same type of side-scrolling combat and one-on-one fight-

ing action, but improves upon the formula with more accurate controls, superior graphics, five playable characters, and a two-player mode pitting one fighter against another. Items to use include: windy shoes (for revisiting places); bait (for attracting enemy soldiers); arms (for mystic spells); mirrors (for repelling enemy spells); and much more. Fighting styles include kung-fu, wrestling, boxing, martial arts, kick boxing, and karate. Includes password feature. Followed by: *Flying Dragon* (Nintendo 64).

Formula One: Built to Win

PUBLISHER: Seta. DEVELOPER: Winky Soft. Formula-1/Indy Racing/Sports Car Racing, 1 player. 1990.

Released by Seta, who later published *F1 Roc* and *F-1 Roc II* for the SNES, *Formula One: Built to Win* is a fast and fun career racer, in which players drive a Mini Cooper, a Vector W2, a Ferrari F40, and a Formula 1. The action takes place in 10 locales: New York, Detroit, Miami, Yellowstone, Denver, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Hawaii, and Las Vegas, the latter of which offers playable slot machines. Success on the various tracks lets gamers increase their ranking and earn cash to purchase faster cars (referenced above) or better car parts, including tires, turbo, engines, and bumpers. As in such games as *Pole Position* (arcade) and *Rad Racer* (NES), the roads twist and turn, and the view is from behind (and slightly above) the player's car. Scenic backgrounds add to the experience.

Fox's Peter Pan and the Pirates

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Equilibrium. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Loosely based on the Fox animated television series (1990–1991), *Peter Pan and the Pirates* has Peter Pan running, jumping, and flying (as long as he has flight energy from eating food) through Neverland, the “magical island where dreams come true and children never get old.” The objective is to rid Neverland of pirates (a level is not complete until all the pirates have been defeated), including the extremely wicked Captain Hook, who must be forced to walk his own gangplank. To battle

bad guys, Peter is armed with a lame, short-range sword, which requires Peter to get close to enemies to stab them or knock them off a ledge. Peter can also wield a musket, and he can tap (with his weapon) cannonballs to send them bowling over pirates. Although playable, *Peter Pan and the Pirates* is plagued by unimaginative level design, slow flight, sparse sound effects, redundant music, mediocre graphics, and dull combat.

Frankenstein: The Monster Returns

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1991.

The Frankenstein monster has risen from the dead, laid waste to the city, and kidnapped a girl named Emily. As a brave villager intent on rescuing the damsel in distress, players must work their way through four levels, jumping on platforms, using keys to open doors, climbing stairs and cliffs, and battling warthogs, bone fish, purple dogs, demon horses, water dragons, evil statues, Dracula, Medusa, and, of course, the Frankenstein monster himself. Gamers can punch, execute jump kicks, use a club and a mace, wield a sword, and grab power-ups for hurling fireballs (including three-way fire). Areas to battle through include a forest, a sewer, a graveyard, and an Evil Dimension. *Frankenstein: The Monster Returns* is somewhat similar to *Castlevania*, but not as good. The graphics are nice, but stiff animation and mediocre combat ruin the fun. Includes password feature, cut scenes, and lots of text. British novelist Mary Shelley's creepy creation made his video game debut in 1983 with *Frankenstein's Monster* for the Atari 2600.

Freedom Force

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Light Gun Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Freedom Force is a nice looking game that is set in and around a terrorist-infested airport. Players, armed with a Zapper light gun (which works great), must avoid shooting innocents while killing pistol-packing, grenade-throwing bad guys that seemingly pop up at random. Shooting icons grants players ammo, health, a stiffer challenge, or one of three different weapons: a .38 caliber gun, a .44 magnum, and a

grenade launcher. Scenes to shoot through include: Aircraft, Jetway-Loading Ladder, Ticket Counter Lobby, Airport Entrance, and Unknown Guerilla Hideout. Between rounds there's a mini-game in which players shoot letters to break a code.

Friday the 13th

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: LJN. Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

Based on the famous slasher film series (which began in 1980 and spawned numerous sequels), *Friday the 13th* takes place at Camp Crystal Lake, where players alternate control between six camp counselors. The objective is to keep children safe from serial killer Jason Vorhees (he of the hockey mask and machete). Three viewpoints are used: a top-down map; a side-view perspective where players throw stones at wolves, zombies, crows, and bats; and a behind-the-counselor view inside maze-like cabins. An axe, a machete, a lighter, a torch, a key, a pitchfork, and other helpful items can be found, but getting lost is all too easy.

Fun House

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Hi Tech Expressions. Game Show/Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Loosely based on the kids' TV game show, which ran from 1988 to 1991, *Fun House* puts players in a pair of rollerblades, rotating right and left and speeding ahead in all directions, throwing tomatoes at targets while avoiding blobs, boingers, bananas, and schmutz balls. To progress to the next room (there are 72 overhead-view rooms in all), players must hit all the targets and grab a key within a set time limit. Slime-covered ramps, moving floors, and icy floors increase the challenge, but the appearance of coins (for extra lives), glop clocks (for extra time), and sneakers (for increased speed) make things somewhat more manageable. Though the game bears little resemblance to its source material, *Fun House* definitely lives up to the first name in its title.

Galactic Crusader

PUBLISHER: Bunch Games. DEVELOPER: Sachen. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

With its solid black backgrounds, simplistic looking enemies (which move in zigzagging and curving patterns), and basic (yet rapid-fire) gameplay, *Galactic Crusader* is a throw-back to the previous generation of console gaming. Players pilot a metamorphic starship up the screen, firing away at space corals, urchin crafts, poisonous ticks, dragon wasps, corrosive spiders, and other enemies while avoiding them and their fire. The starship can morph from a huge flying insect into a metallic destroyer and can attach and detach special firing devices to and from its front and rear. Additional firepower — pulsar waves, plasma blasts, and corkscrew bullets — is obtained via weapon capsules. Much maligned for its archaic look and gameplay, *Galactic Crusader* is nevertheless a solid shooter. Unlicensed.

Galaga: Demons of Death

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Namco. Slide-and-Shoot, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Despite tinny sound effects, somewhat easier gameplay, and the addition of “Demons of Death” to the title, *Galaga* for the NES is virtually a note-for-note port of Namco's timeless 1981 arcade game (which was the sequel to *Galaxian*). Players guide a fighter right and left along the bottom of the screen, shooting upward at waves of ships and bug-like aliens that fly out onto the screen, gather into formation near the top, and then dive-bomb like crazy. The two most memorable aspects of the coin-op classic — the challenge stages, in which players fire with impunity, and the dual firing technique, which is achieved by freeing a captured ship — are kept fully intact, helping make this a retro favorite among NES owners. *Galaga* was also released for the Atari 7800 and Game Boy Color. Followed by: *Gaplus* (arcade), *Galaga '84* (arcade), *Galaga '90* (TurboGrafx-16), *Galaga Legions* (Xbox 360), and other sequels and offshoots.

Galaxy 5000

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Activision. Demolition/Combat Racing/Futuristic Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

One of the best racing games in the NES library, *Galaxy 5000* is similar to *R.C. Pro-Am*, but is set in the 51st century and includes jumping. Players race their armored turbocraft around twisting, turning tracks on nine different planets (this was when Pluto was still considered a planet), trying to beat three other cars. In two-player mode, gamers earn bonus points by getting a screen's length ahead of the other player's vehicle (ala *Auto Racing* for the Intellivision). There are five turbocraft models, each outfitted with two different weapons (machine gun, guided missiles, bombs, fireballs, and the like) for use in destroying obstacles and other cars. Earned money can be used to repair the turbocraft or purchase a new one. Two different control schemes are available.

Gargoyle's Quest II: The Demon Darkness

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Platform Shooter/Adventure, 1 player. 1992.

As in the original *Gargoyle's Quest* (Game Boy), *The Demon Darkness* puts players in control of the winged gargoyle enemy from *Ghosts 'n Goblins*. In the side-scrolling platform areas (dungeons, bridges, and the like), Firebrand (called Red Devil in *Ghosts 'n Goblins*) can jump, cling to walls, fly (briefly), and shoot magic fireballs at the various enemies. Other magic players can acquire includes: blockbuster (destroys blocks that get in the way); claw (lets Firebrand climb up spikes with impunity); essence of soulstream (regains lost stamina); and darkfire (the most powerful magic of all). During the overhead view world map areas, Firebrand talks to zombies, ghouls, and other characters in order to gain helpful items and advance the storyline. New to the series are magic tornadoes Firebrand can use as platforms for reaching high areas.

Gauntlet

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Maze Shooter/Adventure, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Although it retains the basic gameplay and all four playable characters from Atari's 1985

coin-op classic (which stunned gamers of the day with its four-player simultaneous action), *Gauntlet* for the NES has a number of differences, including 100 all new levels, the last of which contains a sacred orb that is accessible only if players have collected all the digits or letters of a password hidden in clue rooms from earlier levels. The NES game also has moveable walls (ala *Gauntlet II*) and a spiffy new title screen, but is missing the many onscreen hints (such as "save keys to open doors") and memorable voice effects (such as "Elf needs food badly"). The view of this quickly paced dungeon crawler is from overhead, with players, as a warrior, elf, wizard, or valkyrie, scurrying around five worlds (including Castle, Dark Forest, and Lost Caverns), shooting monsters (which re-spawn via generators), grabbing keys to open doors, collecting treasure, drinking potions (for speed, power, and health), and searching for the exits. Includes password feature. Although originally released with Nintendo's blessing, *Gauntlet* was later re-released as an unlicensed game. Also released for the Game Boy Advance (via *Gauntlet/Rampage*). Remade for the Nintendo DS.

Gauntlet II

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Mindscape. Maze Shooter/Adventure, 1-4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on Atari's 1986 arcade game, *Gauntlet II* for the NES, like the original *Gauntlet* for the NES, is missing the onscreen hints, but at least *Gauntlet II* retains some of the voice effects, along with the much-appreciated four-player mode (via multi-tap adaptor). The top-down action of *Gauntlet II* evokes the first game in the series as players guide Thor the Warrior, Thyra the Valkyrie, Merlin the Wizard, or Questor the Elf through more than 100 treasure-rich dungeon mazes, shooting battle axes, swords, magic, or arrows (depending on the character) at such enemies as ghosts, demons, and sorcerers. Potions give players extra armor, magic power, speed, shot power, and more. Items in *Gauntlet II* that were not found in the original *Gauntlet* include: "It" enemies, which

make all monsters attracted to the player's character; large, fire-breathing dragons; pools of acid; reflective shots that bounce off walls; and more. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *Gauntlet: The Third Encounter* (Atari Lynx), *Gauntlet IV* (Genesis), *Gauntlet Legends* (arcade, various), *Gauntlet: Dark Legacy* (arcade, various), and *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows* (PS2, Xbox).

Gemfire

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Gemfire puts players on a quest to reunite six different gems (each housing a wizard or a sorceress) with a magical crown and free Princess Robyn, who has been put in jail by King Eselred, the evil ruler of Ishmeria. Using a combination of military and domestic tactics, players must unite all the provinces of the land under one banner. This entails cultivating the land, protecting provinces, trading for food and gold, plundering neighboring provinces, gaining the support of the people, expanding into other lands, hiring creatures to fight wars, recruiting vassals from other rulers, investing in an army, and much more. Armies consist of five units: cavalry, infantry (which claims two units), archers, and a special unit consisting of mercenaries, monsters, wizards, and sorceresses. Battles are view from an angled/overhead perspective, with players selecting from such options as wait, move, command unit, build fence, and retreat. Includes battery backup. Also released for the Genesis and SNES.

Genghis Khan

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

The third in a trilogy of historical simulators from Koei (after *Nobunaga's Ambition* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), *Genghis Khan* lets players assume the role of King Richard the Lion-Hearted, Emperor Alexious III, Shogun Minamoto Yoritomo, or even the titular warlord himself. The game takes place in the 12th

century, and the goal is to unify the 14 tribes of the Mongul Plains (in Mongul Conquest mode) or the entire world (in World Conquest mode). This involves collecting taxes, drafting and hiring troops, purchasing food and weapons (daggers, swords, axes, lances, pikes, and bombs), sending out spies, attacking other countries, marrying off daughters, managing rebellions, coping with hostile weather, and much more. Players monitor map screens and select from numerous text menus, and the key to success is to understand how each of the commands given affects all the factors in the game, and to plan subsequent moves accordingly. Includes battery backup. Adapted from the 1989 computer game. Followed by: *Genghis Khan II: Clan of the Gray Wolf* (Genesis, SNES).

George Foreman's KO Boxing

PUBLISHER: Acclaim Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Sports/Boxing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Take on the role of the former Heavyweight Champion in *George Foreman's KO Boxing*, which features a behind-the-boxer viewpoint similar to that of *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!* Foreman, who must work his way past 12 fictional opponents in a series of three-round fights, can block, dodge left and right (there is no movement around the ring), throw left and right crosses and jabs, and execute super-punches, the latter of which are earned by performing the right combinations of successful punches. To help George recover from a knock-down, players must press A or B in rapid succession. In this version of the game, damage is tracked by simple meters, but in the Genesis and SNES renditions, damage is shown via swelling, bruising, and blood on a pair of portraits positioned on the lower corners of the screen. Includes password feature. Also released for the Game Boy and Game Gear.

Ghost Lion

PUBLISHER: Kemco. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1992.

To find her parents and unravel the mystery of the fierce, village-haunting Ghost Lion, Maria must journey through caves, forests, pyr-

amids, and other overhead-view areas, braving such vicious creatures as skeletons, zombies, goblins, and dog-faced monsters. When an enemy attacks, players can run or engage in a static, close-up, turn-based battle, in which players select magic fighting tools or call upon a spirit. Forms of magic include needles, bombs, darkness, flames, storms, thunder, protective barriers, and more. Throughout the adventure, Maria will gather fragments of hope for increasing her courage (energy) and dreams (which let her call upon the aforementioned spirits). Maria will also collect rubies, which are used for purchasing keys, bread, a sword, and other useful items. The box claims that *Ghost Lion* (called “Legend of the Ghost Lion” on the title screen) is a “great role-playing game for beginners” while the manual recommends that players draw their own maps. Includes battery backup. Similar to: *Dragon Warrior*.

Ghostbusters

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: BITS Studios. Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

Hampered by boring maze scenarios (guide the Ghostbusters icon around a map, enter flashing buildings), redundant driving sequences (drive up the screen, dodge enemy vehicles, suck up ghosts), mundane ghost-busting action (stand under ghosts, trap them in streams), and tough stair-climbing levels (climb 22 floors, avoid ghosts), *Ghostbusters* gives players \$10,000 for starting their own Ghostbusters franchise, but even fans of the popular film (1984) may want to reconsider. Busting ghosts nets extra money, which players can use to purchase the following strategic items: a ghost vacuum, a sound generator, a capture beam, a hyper beam, ghost food, an anti-ghost suit, a capture trap, and a super trap. Compare this to the superior (though equally convoluted) Master System version, which has 15 items, including a laser confinement system for keeping the ghost traps perpetually empty and a marshmallow sensor for detecting the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. In both games, Ray Parker’s familiar theme song plays constantly. Based on the 1984 computer game. Also released for the Atari 2600.

Ghostbusters II

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Shooter/Slide-and-Shoot, 1 player. 1990.

Taking place five years after the original *Ghostbusters*, *Ghostbusters II* (based on the 1989 horror/comedy film) drops the needless complexity of the first game, making for a more enjoyable (if still difficult) experience. The action is divided into three types of gameplay spread over seven areas. Tunnel of Slime, Order in the Court, Subway Slime, and Storming the Museum have players running, jumping, firing a slime blower at ghosts, and setting traps for ghosts. The *Moon Patrol*-like Hitting the Road and Ghosts in the Park have players driving down a side-scrolling street, firing at ghosts and dodging or jumping over manholes and other obstacles. The Statue of Liberty Strikes Back finds Lady Liberty walking through the harbor and the streets of Manhattan, firing her torch at swarming ghosts. Also released for the Game Boy, but in a much different form.

Ghosts ’n Goblins

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

Despite slightly less detailed (but still gorgeously creepy) graphics and clunkier controls, *Ghosts ’n Goblins* for the NES is an excellent port of Capcom’s notoriously difficult, yet strangely addictive arcade game (1985). Players guide a running, jumping, climbing (up ladders) knight through seven hellish levels, throwing javelins, torches, swords, axes, and crosses at zombies, dragons, devils, cyclopean unicorn beasts, bats, skeletons, and other monstrous enemies. One hit reduces the knight to his boxers, and one more kills him, but armor pick-ups are available. Also released for the Game Boy Color. Followed by: *Ghouls ’n Ghosts* (arcade, SMS, Genesis), *Super Ghouls ’n Ghosts* (SNES, Game Boy Advance), and *Ultimate Ghosts ’n Goblins* (PSP).

Ghoul School

PUBLISHER: Electro Brain. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

Designed by Garry Kitchen (of Activision fame), this disappointing game finds a teen punk named Spike wandering through his ghoulish school, warding off bats, skeletons, giant eyeball monsters, the Frankenstein monster, the Grim Reaper, Medusa's head, and other creepy (if cartoonish) creatures. Armed with such weapons as a baseball bat, a sickle, embalming fluid, a towel (snap!), and a gun, Spike can acquire spring shoes for higher leaps and suction cups for walking on ceilings, and he can enter lockers to avoid enemies. Obstacles include crates, pointers (similar to spikes), skulls, and rooftop vents. Regrettably, tepid combat and tedious exploration suck the fun out of what could have been a cool cartridge. Stick with *Ghosts 'n Goblins*.

G.I. Joe — The Atlantis Factor

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

The sequel to *G.I. Joe — A Real American Hero*, *The Atlantis Factor* begins with players in control of General Hawk, but level progression gives gamers access to the following characters: Wet-Suit (underwater expert); Storm Shadow (ninja magic maven); Snake Eyes (martial arts master); Roadblock (totes a heavy machine gun); and Duke (small arms expert). Players can select various routes through the game via a mission map, but the ability to drive Cobra vehicles is gone. Weaponry for battling the various enemies (Overkill, Cesspool, Destro, and the like) includes a variety of punches, kicks, sword attacks, guns (machine, pulse, and laser), a battle orb (which circles the Joe), and a missile launcher. Blasting open such things as crates, walls, and hillsides reveals bonus items, including Pows (increases power of current weapon), extra points, k-rations (partially refills health bar), and ammo. Includes password feature. The G.I. Joe games are based on Hasbro's military action figure line, which began in 1964.

G.I. Joe — A Real American Hero

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: Taxan. Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1991.

The evil Cobra organization has been terrorizing the world for decades, and it is up to The G.I. Joe Team to bring down this group of thugs. The team consists of: Duke (ring laser rifle, front punch); Blizzard (flame ball, dagger); Snake Eyes (jitsu of power, katana sword); Captain Grid-Iron (grenade launcher, front punch); and Rock & Roll (spread machine gun, front punch). Duke is the leader of the mission, and players can select two others to be on their team. In addition to running, jumping, and battling bad guys through maze-like jungles, players must place bombs at pre-determined locations and then find the exit. Ammo is limited, so players should conserve accordingly. At certain points in the game, players will commandeer the following Cobra vehicles: Pogo (moves slowly, jumps high); Interrogator (a one-man copter); and Buzz Boar (clings to ceilings and walls). In the final stage, a jetpack-wearing General Hawk is a playable character. Includes password feature.

Gilligan's Island

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

Based on the popular sitcom, which ran on CBS from 1964 to 1967, *Gilligan's Island* for the NES unfortunately lacks the humor and goofy fun of the TV show. There are four different "episodes," each of which has the Skipper and Gilligan wandering around performing a variety of dull tasks, including saving other crew members (rescuing Mary Ann from headhunters has never been more boring), deciphering clues, searching for Mr. Howell's golf ball, collecting materials to build a hut, and gathering coconuts. Swimming, punching wild animals, and dodging rocks and trees can't rescue the game from sheer tedium. The top two-thirds of the screen depict the side-view action while the bottom section displays text, life hearts, and a mapping system. Lucky for Ginger, she's not in the game.

Goal!

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco.
Sports/Soccer, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Goal! lets players select from 16 international teams for World Cup soccer, or from eight American squads in a three-round Pro Tournament. Teams consist of 10 players (plus a goalie), each rated according to dribbling, kicking power, speed, tacking ability, shooting ratio, marking (defending a specific player), and ball-keeping ability. There's also a Shoot Competition and a VS. Mode. Realistic features of the sport abound, including hooking, slicing, back spin, extending shots, tackling, steals, headers, corner kicks, and throw-ins. The view is from overhead, but the field scrolls diagonally. Also released for the Game Boy and SNES.

Goal! Two

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco.
Sports/Soccer, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1992.

Goal! Two looks similar to *Goal!*, but the players appear bigger. There are now 24 international teams, but the American city teams and the Shoot Competition have been removed. Imbued with lots of options, *Goal! Two* lets players do the following: select 11 players from a squad of 15; adjust the length of halves between 1 and 45 minutes; change field formations (4-3-3, 4-4-2, or 3-5-2); select from two types of control (upward-diagonal or standard directional); and turn auto-goalie, fouls, and offsides on or off. Modes of play include Exhibition Match and Super Cup.

Godzilla: Monster of Monsters!

PUBLISHER: Toho. DEVELOPER: Toho. Side-Scrolling Combat/Fighting, 1 player. 1989.

Godzilla for the NES consists of three types of gameplay: moving Godzilla and Mothra around a hexagonal grid (a fairly pointless exercise); engaging in sluggish side-scrolling combat; and battling one-on-one against Ghidora, Gigan, Mecha-Godzilla, and other nicely rendered giant monsters from Toho's famed film franchise. Godzilla can do a radiation kick and a tail chop while Mothra fights using eye beams and a poisonous powder attack. Unfortunately, the fighting action is dreadful. Godzilla, who first appeared in film in

1954, has stomped his way through numerous other video games, including *Super Godzilla* (SNES), *Godzilla: The Series* (Game Boy Color), and *Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee* (GameCube, Xbox).

Godzilla 2: War of the Monsters

PUBLISHER: Toho. DEVELOPER: Toho. Turn-Based Strategy, 1 player. 1992.

The famous monsters of Japan's Toho studios, including such stalwarts as Godzilla, Mothra, Rodan, Ghidora, Hedora, and Baragon, are attacking the city, and players must command the Allied Defense Forces to stop this heinous invasion (which also includes attacks by flying saucers). The game's 12 scenarios take place via a square grid/overhead/city view, with players controlling the movements of fighters, tanks, missiles, freezers, trailers, radar cars, atomic bombs, destroyers, and other vehicles and weapons. There are six vital points on the map to pay special attention to: Army Base, Air Base, International Conference Center, Space Center, Nuclear Power Plant, and Laboratory. During battle mode, the game switches to a side-view perspective, in which players select from a list of weapons to use against the monster in question. Godzilla fans who enjoy slow, methodical strategy should appreciate *Godzilla 2: War of the Monsters*.

Golf

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Sports/Golf, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1985.

A system launch title, *Golf* for the NES serves up one well designed 18-hole course and three enjoyable modes of play: 1-Player Stroke, 2-Player Stroke, and 2-Player Match. Gamers can choose their own clubs, alter their stance and the power of their swings (via a swing meter), and select the angle of impact on the ball for a straight, a slice, or a hook. If the timing is right (in accordance with the swing meter) when using a #1 wood, players can pull off a 306-yard super shot. Trees (and wooded areas in general) are out of bounds, and players should take into account water hazard placement (including rivers, ponds, and the ocean), the direction and velocity of the wind,

and the condition of the putting greens. Includes behind-the-golfer and overhead viewpoints.

Golf Grand Slam

PUBLISHER: Atlus Software. DEVELOPER: Atlus Software. Sports/Golf, 1–4 players (alternating). 1991.

In this obscure, but ambitious golf simulator, the golfer is viewed from behind in a small square positioned at the bottom left side of the screen. An overhead view of the course takes up the majority of the rest of the screen, giving players a nice look at the various greens, trees, shrubs, roughs, sand traps, water hazards, fairways, slopes, and bunkers. Using a targeting cursor, a selection screen (where players choose the club, stance, grip, direction, and hitting strength), and a strike point meter (where a small dot darts from place to place on a large golf ball), skilled gamers can hit the ball into play with a good degree of accuracy. Wind speed and direction also play a factor. There are two Training modes and a Tournament mode, the latter pitting players against 30 other golfers.

Golgo 13: Top Secret Episode

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai. Multi-Genre Game/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

Based on the long-running manga series, *Golgo 13* puts players in the role of assassin Duke Togo (a.k.a. Golgo 13), a secret agent who must uncover the mystery surrounding a missing bacteriological weapon, clearing his name in the process. The surprisingly adult (it's implied that the titular hero gets laid) game is comprised of 13 action scenarios (each named after a classic film), including: first-person shootouts in a pseudo-3D maze; side-scrolling battles in the city (in which sharpshooter Duke is armed with a gun); side-scrolling shootouts in the skies (in which ace pilot Duke commands a helicopter); and side-scrolling shootouts under water (in which a scuba gear-wearing Duke shoots and dodges sharks, octopi, frogmen corps, and marine plants). Duke jumps ridiculously high and is rather stiffly animated, and none of the scenes taken separately would make a particularly great game, but the sum is

definitely greater than its parts. Followed by: *The Mafat Conspiracy*.

The Goonies II

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1987.

The sequel to *The Goonies*, which was only released in the arcades and on the Japanese Famicom, *The Goonies II*, like its progenitor, is based on *The Goonies* feature film, which was released in 1985. Players, as Mikey, must journey through the Fratelli mansion (which includes an ice cavern and an underground sea), using such weapons as a slingshot, a yo-yo, bombs, boomerangs, and an underwater gun to ward off spiders, penguins, sharks, and other creatures. The mission is to find fellow Goonies, including Annie the Mermaid. There's lots of platforming action, plus some first-person, pseudo-3D areas where players talk to characters and search for clues, keys, a waterproof coat, a helmet, a hammer, a magic locator device, and other helpful items. Includes a nice rendition of the movie theme song.

Gotcha! The Sport!

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: LJN. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Loosely based on the 1985 feature film, *Gotcha!* is a surprisingly fun, highly original paintball game that is played like capture the flag. The control pad scrolls the action (a rarity for a gun game) right and left while the light gun is used for picking off opponents and shooting the opponents' flag. After snagging the flag, the player must return it to home base, shooting enemies and avoiding their fire along the way. Shooting smaller enemies nets more points than larger ones, and a map across the top of the screen shows the position of the flags. Three difficulty levels are available: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. There are only three stages (Forest, Bronx, and Winter), but they look terrific.

Gradius

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

A nice port of Konami's 1985 coin-op classic, *Gradius* is a must-own shooter for NES fans. Players pilot a sleek Warp Rattler ship through seven intense stages (including Volcanic and Stonehenge), firing lasers, double beams, and air-to-surface missiles at a variety of alien ships, robots, and amoeboid creatures. A nifty power-up system lets players grab capsules and select which powers to boost, including speed, missile, double, and laser. A force field barrier and doppelganger ship help keep the Warp Rattler safe, but *Gradius* remains a challenge. Pressing up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A at the title screen lets players begin with a full set of power-ups, introducing the famous Konami Code (which was popularized in *Contra*). Followed by: *Life Force* (NES), *Gradius II* (arcade), *Gradius III* (SNES), *Gradius III and IV* (PS2), *Gradius V* (PS2), *Gradius Galaxies* (Game Boy Advance), and *Gradius Collection* (PSP).

The Great Waldo Search

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Radiance Software. Action Puzzle/Educational/General, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

The Great Waldo Search has players guiding a magnifying glass around five busily illustrated (if mostly static), side-scrolling worlds, searching for magic scrolls, clocks (for extra time), point markers, and, of course, Waldo himself, who appears in a different place every time the game is played. Also hidden is Waldo's dog Woof, who, when found, instigates a flying carpet bonus round in which he flies over a cityscape, collecting points. Searchable worlds include: Land of the Gargantuas, Kingdom of the Carpet Flyers, Water Monks vs. Fire Druids, Enchanted Underground, and Land of the Waldos. Expert mode adds bonus challenges while a special Parent Feature lets mom or dad turn off the clock and/or force the screen to go to the hidden objects. A funky, digitized musical intro (by Jeff Barry) belies the mundane nature of the game. Based on the series of search-and-find picture books. Also released for the Genesis and SNES (sans the cool musical intro, but with more animation). See also: *Where's Waldo?* (NES).

Greg Norman's Golf Power

PUBLISHER: Virgin Games. DEVELOPER: Grem-lin Graphics. Sports/Golf, 1-4 players (alternating). 1992.

In *Greg Norman's Golf Power*, gamers can play on a pre-set course in England, Scotland, Japan, or the USA, or they can design and save their own 18-hole dream course. After an inexplicable load screen (a rarity for a cartridge game), in which a blinking "creating course please wait" message appears, players will view the action from behind the golfer. This perspective is supplemented by an overhead view of the hole, which appears via a vertical strip along the right side of the screen. When the ball gets close to the hole, a large overhead view of the green appears, supplemented by a small view of the golfer in the upper right corner. Hitting the ball involves aiming, adjusting topspin or backspin, and activating a shot meter, the latter of which determines power, hooking, and slicing. Features include: putting and driving ranges, club selection, three difficulty levels, changing wind and weather conditions, and Practice, Matchplay, and Strokeplay. Includes battery backup.

Gremlins 2: The New Batch

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Overhead View Action, 1 player. 1990.

Loosely based on Joe Dante's 1990 feature film, *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* is a nice looking game that gives Gizmo a surprisingly large role. Players guide the furry Mogwai around rooms in the Clamp Centre building, jumping over gaps and onto platforms, and throwing tomatoes, lit matches, and paperclips at Gremlins and other creatures. Gizmo can also use flashbulbs (for destroying all onscreen enemies), crystal balls (for purchasing items in Mr. Wing's shop), balloons (to float over holes), and other items. The platforming action is unusual for an overhead-view game, and it makes certain jumps hard to judge. Includes password feature. Much different than the side-scrolling Game Boy version.

The Guardian Legend

PUBLISHER: Broderbund Software. DEVELOPER: Compile. Vertical Scrolling Shooter/Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

The Guardian Legend alternates between *Zanac*-style shooter action and *Legend of Zelda*-type exploration, the latter of which has an intrepid female walking around labyrinthine corridors and dungeons, shooting aliens (with names like Eyegore and Clawbot), using keys to enter rooms, and finding weapons. A grid map helps gamers track their movement. In the rapid-fire spaceship levels, which are harder, faster paced, and more enjoyable than the adventure areas, players fly up the screen, blasting away at onslaught after onslaught of alien ships, space rocks, and other enemies. Weapons include multi-bullets, back fire, area blaster, repeller (spinning bullets), wave attack, bullet shield, enemy eraser, grenades, fireballs, and lasers (hyper, cutter, and saber). Includes pass-word feature.

Guerilla War

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Predictably, *Guerilla War* for the NES has less detailed graphics than the 1987 SNK arcade semi-classic, but the gameplay is faster, making for a more intense experience. In fact, it moves at a quicker pace than all the other games of its type, including *Front Line*, *Ikari Warriors*, and *Rambo*. Players guide a soldier through heavily guarded villages, beaches, and other locations, firing machine guns, rockets, grenades (which remove barriers and tanks), and flamethrowers at enemy troops. The arcade game boasts rotary controls, but the NES pad works just fine.

Gumshoe

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Light Gun Shooter/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1986.

In this inventive and enjoyable light gun shooter, a detective named Mr. Stevenson moves automatically to the right, oblivious to the rocks, cars, planes, bombs, alligators, skulls,

and other hindrances in his path. It is up to the player to shoot and destroy the enemies and obstacles, and players can even shoot Mr. Stevenson himself, which makes him jump over various obstructions. The objective is to collect five Black Panther diamonds in order to free Emerson's kidnapped daughter. There are four levels of play: City, Sky, Sea, and Jungle.

Gun-Nac

PUBLISHER: ASCII Entertainment Software. DEVELOPER: Compile. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Gun-Nac is an obscure, yet fast, fun, and furious shooter with an amusing premise. In a distant solar system comprised of eight planets, animals, plants, and factory products have begun attacking people, and it is up to Commander Gun-Nac to save the day. The ship the commander pilots uses five types of weapons (blaster, screen buster, search driver, dragon napalm, and wide beam) and five types of bombs (fire, blizzard, thunder, water, and letter) to destroy enemy vessels and bosses. A supply shop is available for purchasing fire power increases and the aforementioned weapons.

Gun.Smoke

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Although it has less detailed graphics, *Gun.Smoke* for the NES is a distinct improvement over its already enjoyable coin-op counterpart (1985, Capcom). The game takes advantage of the console format by allowing players to purchase weapons (shotgun, machinegun, magnum, bombs) and wanted posters, the latter of which must be acquired in each stage to reach that level's boss. The ingenious three-way fire has been left intact, but the game is not as brutally difficult. Gameplay involves guiding cowboy Billy Bob up the screen, shooting at punks, Indians, riflemen, snipers, and other bad guys. Destroying barrels reveals treasure, rifles, horses, and other useful items. Levels of play include: Town of Hicksville, The Boulders, Comanche Village, Death Mountain, Cheyenne River, and Fort Wingate.

Gyromite

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1985.

Gyromite is a platformer containing elements of *Super Mario Bros.* and *Donkey Kong Jr.*, but with an interesting (if convoluted) twist. Packaged with R.O.B., the game uses the painfully slow Robotic Operating Buddy to push buttons on the second controller, which moves gates blocking the player's progress. The objective is to guide Professor Hector up and down and across the platforms of 40 phases, defusing dynamite while avoiding holes and Smick creatures, the latter of which can be distracted with turnips. Game B finds Hector walking in his sleep, with R.O.B. operating the gates to keep him safe. A system launch title. See also: *Stack-Up*.

Gyruss

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

Gyruss for the NES is easier than Konami's 1983 arcade classic and includes the following upgrades: an introduction by Genghis Khan; bosses; remixed music (including some new tunes); 39 stages (as opposed to 23); larger, more detailed graphics; and a special Ultra-Lazonic Phaser weapon, which cuts a swath through all the enemies in its path. Gameplay consists of guiding a Neo-Tutonic Cannon in a circular motion around the screen, shooting inward at alien attackers. Destroying bonus spheres equips the cannon with dual fire. In the NES game, the enemies look more like mechanized space bugs, less like conventional aircraft. *Gyruss* has often been described as a cross between *Tempest* and *Galaga*, which is a fitting comparison. Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, and ColecoVision.

Harlem Globetrotters

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Softie.
Sports/Basketball, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Play as or against the “Clown Princes of Basketball” in *Harlem Globetrotters* for the NES. When playing as the titular team, gamers can execute the following trick maneuvers: behind-the-back pass, slam dunk, piggy back slam, pull down the referee's pants, trip the referee, and ball on elastic. Despite these funky flourishes, the game plays a fairly mundane rendition of five-on-five hoops, and the Globetrotters aren't even wearing their patented red, white, and blue uniforms. The elevated view is from the side, and the screen scrolls horizontally (as in most basketball video games of the era). Fouls are seldom called, but most of the bare essentials are here, including jump balls, jump shots, steals, passes, rebounds, free throws, and cheerleaders. The shot clock is 45 seconds, and players can adjust quarter length and select from two difficulty levels. Multi-tap adapter compatible. The far-famed hoopsters also appear in *Harlem Globetrotters World Tour* (Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS).

Hatris

PUBLISHER: Bullet-Proof Software. DEVELOPER: Paragraph. Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1991.



Two terrific arcade ports for the NES: *Gun.Smoke*, a vertical scrolling shooter, and *SkyKid*, a side-scrolling shooter.

Programmed by Alexey Pajitnov (along with Vladimir Pokhilko), the Russian designer of the groundbreaking *Tetris*, *Hatris* replaces the blocks in *Tetris* with hats, putting a new (yet hardly original) twist on the falling object subgenre. Hats fall in pairs, and the object is to stack them in vertical rows of five in order to make them disappear. There are six different types of hats: ball cap, cowboy hat, crown, derby, top hat, and wizard hat. As a pair of hats falls down the screen, players can switch the positions of those hats. The NES version is a port of Video System's 1990 arcade game, which has a two-player split-screen mode, a more sophisticated title screen, and better, more colorful graphics. Also released for the Game Boy. Similar to: *Dr. Mario*, *Puyo Puyo*, *Columns*, and *Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine*.

Heavy Barrel

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Heavy Barrel for the NES lacks the rotary control of the visually sharper arcade original (Data East, 1987), meaning players can only fire in the direction they are moving. Gameplay remains a blast, however, with players running around seven different levels (including a quarry, a maze of stairways, and a weapons assembly area), using such weapons as guns, grenades, and a flamethrower to blow away terrorists, tanks, helicopters, bunker doors, gun turrets, and other enemies and obstacles. Finding keys lets players open six different storage lockers containing pieces of a special Heavy Barrel weapon.

Heavy Shreddin'

PUBLISHER: Parker Brothers. DEVELOPER: Imaginering. Sports/Snowboarding, 1 player. 1990.

A precursor of sorts to such games as *Cool Boarders* (PlayStation) and *SSX Tricky* (GameCube, PS2, Xbox), *Heavy Shreddin'* has players snowboarding down Poseur Peak, Scary Summit, and Mt. Mortified, performing stunts (toe grab, hand-plant, mid-air 360, and mule-kick) and negotiating such obstacles as trees, cliffs, ice ponds, rocks, tunnels, waterfalls, gates, semi

trucks, and other skiers. Events include: Down-hill, Slalom, Half-pipe, Moguls, and Backwoods. Viewed from the side, the action moves from left to right. Wiley Asher, senior editor of *International Snowboard Magazine*, had this to say about the cartridge: "The realism of *Heavy Shreddin'* is uncanny.... Nintendo and snowboarding freaks everywhere will be addicted to this game."

High Speed

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare. Pinball, 1–4 players (alternating). 1991.

High Speed is based on Williams' police chase-themed pinball machine of the same name (1985), which takes place on the Santa Monica freeway. The NES rendition adds a number of features to the formula, including a lightning bomb weapon and the following enemies: acid patch; water puddle; tumbleweed (picks up the ball and drops it between the flippers); rust balls (dissolves the flipper mounting); heli-bombs; manic mechanic (stuns and destroys the ball); magnetic helicopter (carries the ball off the playfield); and barriers. In addition, there are two bonus games: Pachinko and Race. Players can shake the playfield left and right, and the screen scrolls to always show the ball and splits to always show the flippers. Includes voice effects.

Hogan's Alley

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1985.

Hogan's Alley has players pointing the Nintendo Zapper gun at the screen, firing at targets. In game A, three panels appear in a row, facing sideways. The three panels will then turn in unison, displaying a drawing of a person on each panel. Players should shoot the gangster panels (there are three types of gangsters) while avoiding the lady, the professor, and the policeman. In game B, similar rules apply, but with panels appearing in the windows of buildings and around said buildings. Game C is Trick Shot, in which spinning cans move from right to left across the screen. Players must shoot the cans to keep them from falling too far and to guide them to platforms of varying point values.

A nice alternative to *Duck Hunt*, *Hogan's Alley* was a system launch title and a precursor to such games as the *Lethal Enforcers* series. Based on Nintendo's 1984 arcade game.

Hollywood Squares

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Despite a conspicuous absence of real celebrities, *Hollywood Squares* is a fun, easy-to-play rendition of the classic TV game show (which is a cross of sorts between a trivia contest and tic-tac-toe). The playfield is a 3 × 3 grid of pseudo celebrities. When it's the player's turn, he or she must select a celebrity. That celebrity will be asked a question, and the player must decide whether or not the celebrity is giving the correct answer. If the player guesses correctly, the space that celebrity occupies will be filled with an X or an O. If a player gets three Xs or Os in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), he or she will win. The fictional game show host (John Davidson, who hosted the TV show from 1986 to 1989, is regrettably absent) and other characters blink, smile, and turn their heads a bit, and the jokey answers to the questions are oftentimes very funny. Unfortunately, there are fewer than 500 questions, meaning repetition occurs fairly often.

Home Alone

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Bethesda Softworks. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Characterized by glitch-ridden programming, imprecise control (beginning a climb is especially unforgiving), and simple gameplay, *Home Alone* for the NES is based on the climax of the 1990 blockbuster film. Unlike the movie ending, however, the two bad guys are already in the house when the game begins. The player, as Kevin (portrayed by Macaulay Culkin in the film), must run around his house, setting traps for Marv and Harry, who remain in hot pursuit. Each trap, be it a light bulb, a soda can, a water balloon, or other such item, behaves the same, stalling the bumbling bandits for a few seconds. The objective is to avoid making contact with Marv and Harry for 20 real-time minutes, which

is when the police arrive. Also released for the Game Boy, Game Gear, SNES, and Genesis.

Home Alone 2: Lost in New York

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the 1992 feature film, *Home Alone 2* finds Kevin McCallister once again separated from his family, with "Wet Bandits" Marv and Harry in hot pursuit. Kevin must run, jump, duck, and ride elevators in such New York locales as the Plaza Hotel, Central Park, and his uncle's townhouse. Other activities include dodging suitcases, finding keys to open doors, scaling the Christmas tree at the Rockefeller Center, and much more. To battle enemies, Kevin can use darts, a sliding attack, and flying fists. Power-ups enable Kevin to acquire extra lives, replenish power, perform a spin-jump attack, gain extra speed, jump higher, and become invulnerable. Regrettably, poor controls ruin the entire experience. Also released for the Game Boy, SNES, and Genesis.

Hook

PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

Based on the 1991 fantasy film, *Hook* lets players guide Peter Pan through various areas of Neverland (including forests, caves, underground caverns, lagoons, and icy regions), each of which contains items that Pan must collect in order to complete the level. Throughout the adventure (which is tepid, boring, and poorly programmed), Pan will climb ladders and ropes, swim and fly past obstacles, jump on moving platforms, engage in swordfights with Rufio and Captain Hook, use a metal detector to locate treasure, and call on Tink to help defeat the pirates, spiders, penguins, banana-throwing monkeys, and other enemies. Also released for the Game Boy, Game Gear, Genesis, and SNES.

Hoops

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Despite close-up dunk animations, *Hoops* largely ignores the aesthetic established by *Bubble Dribble* (arcade, NES). Rather, the game is a throwback to *One-on-One*, the old computer title starring Dr. J. and Larry Bird. Viewed from above/behind the top of the key, *Hoops* features one-on-one and two-on-two street ball, with players competing against one another or teaming up against the computer. There's also a nifty game of Around the World, the popular shooting contest that is rarely seen in a video game. In addition, the game offers eight distinctive characters, solid gameplay, and a variety of foul calls. *Hoops* may be old fashioned, but it's a lot of fun.

Hot Slots

PUBLISHER: Panesian. DEVELOPER: Panesian. Gambling, 1 player. 1991.

One of the most sought after games in the NES library, *Hot Slots*, like *Peek-A-Boo Poker* and *Bubble Bath Babes*, is an unlicensed adult game from Panesian that is very hard to find. The game features three different slot machines—Cutie Bunny, Juicy Fruit, and Las Vegas—each of which is represented by a seductive babe who flirts and takes her clothes off when the player wins lots of money. The dialogue is laughably bad, but makes humorous use of such suggestively ambiguous words as “slot” and “cherry.”

Hudson Hawk

PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the 1991 box office bomb, *Hudson Hawk* puts players in the title role, which was played by Bruce Willis in the movie. Hawk, an ex-cat burglar, is blackmailed into stealing priceless works of art from a heavily guarded auction house and from the Vatican. This involves: running across floors of the buildings; jumping over obstacles and up to high places; crawling under electric eyes and through booby-trapped ventilation shafts; climbing ladders and ropes; riding platform lifts; dodging bullets, steam, and guard dogs; going through doors, windows, and laundry chutes; and more.

Having to push boxes into place to reach certain areas adds minor puzzle elements to the game. To fend off enemies, Hawk can punch and throw softballs. Like the movie itself, *Hudson Hawk* for the NES was widely panned upon release. Also released for the Game Boy.

The Hunt for Red October

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Unlike many movie-based games, which incorporate a variety of genres and locations, *The Hunt for Red October* is a simple side-scroller. Players, as Captain Marko Ramius, pilot the Soviet Typhoon submarine Red October through hazardous waters in hopes of reaching a U.S. port. The sub is equipped with the following: armor; Electronic Counter-Measures (which act as decoys); upgradeable torpedoes (for horizontal shooting); missiles (for vertical shooting); and caterpillar drive (for invisibility). In addition to shooting enemy ships, players must grab fuel and avoid walls. Compared to the 1990 film (or to most any other shooter), this game is decidedly weak, plagued as it is by repetitious sounds, lousy graphics (which include backgrounds consisting of purple bricks), and slow, frustrating gameplay. Adding insult to injury, the playfield only takes up 2/3 of the screen. Also released for the Game Boy and SNES, the latter version of which has missions and levels, including some that support the Super Scope light rifle.

Hydlide

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: T&E Soft. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1989.

The storyline for *Hydlide*, which revolves around Princess Ann being turned into three fairies, is as lame and as unimportant as the game itself. Cast in the role of a brave young knight named Jim, players walk around an overworld (forests, deserts, plains, and the like) and through caves (some of which are dark), leveling up by slaying goblins, wizards, dragons, zombies, vampire bats, and other enemies. The limp, ill-conceived battle system has players

holding down the A button and simply running into the various creatures. Holding down B (in conjunction with A) unleashes fire, ice, shockwaves, and other magical attacks while pressing neither button puts Jim in defend mode. Treasures to find during this ugly little adventure include a sword of the brave, a shield of justice, immortal medicine, an eternal lamp, and more. Includes password feature. Followed by: *Super Hydlide* (Genesis) and *Virtual Hydlide* (Saturn).

Ice Climber

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Vertical Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1985.

Despite its title, *Ice Climber* is not a climbing game. Each of the game's 32 mountains is a series of platforms consisting of small ice blocks. To move upward and eventually to the top of a mountain, players must jump into ice blocks from below to create holes that can be jumped through. Enemies and obstacles to watch for include falling icicles, Toppies (which fill holes), Nitpicker birds (which can be defeated with an ice hammer), and more. At the top of each mountain is a timed, vegetable-gathering bonus round. The controls are a bit clunky, but *Ice Climber* oozes with old-school charms and challenges. A system launch title. Also released for the Game Boy Advance.

Ice Hockey

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Sports/Hockey, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

More cartoonish and decidedly less violent than Konami's popular *Blades of Steel*, *Ice Hockey* for the NES lacks the one-on-one fighting of the aforementioned classic, but nevertheless gives players an entertaining, highly accessible rendition of the manly sport. Armchair athletes can select from five game speeds, and they can form their own team by selecting the physical attributes (thin, fat, and average) of their players. These attributes determine the players' shot strength and sticking, checking, and face-off abilities. Between periods, Zamboni machines drive across the ice (which is viewed from overhead).

Ikari Warriors

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Despite a number of shortcomings (slow characters, excessive usage of pink) and glitches (including the possibility of getting stuck behind a wall), *Ikari Warriors* is a popular title for the NES, thanks in part to unlimited continues and explosive two-player action. Gamers, as Rambo-style heroes Paul or Vince, must trudge through four overhead view levels of play (primarily jungles), firing a machine gun and throwing hand grenades at soldiers, snipers, tanks, rock faces, and other enemies. For enhanced firepower, gamers can occasionally hop into a tank (ala *Front Line*) or a helicopter. When compared to the faster, more playable Tradewest arcade game (1986), the NES rendition lacks rotary control and forced scrolling. The 7800 version lacks these elements as well, but moves faster and has a more reasonable level of difficulty. The NES game does have better graphics than its 7800 counterpart, though both are missing certain details found in the arcade game. Also released for the Atari 2600.

Ikari Warriors II: Victory Road

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

After rescuing the colonel in the original *Ikari Warriors*, Paul and Vince were trying to return home when they got zapped into the future, in which Zang Zip the War Dog has enslaved the people of Earth. Once again, Paul and Vince must mow down bad guys (aliens in this case) with machine guns and grenades, but they've added bazookas, boomerangs, and swords to their arsenal. In addition, they can use landmines to blast through walls and rocks, meaning players won't get stuck like in the original *Ikari Warriors* (NES version). Other new features include: barshops (where players purchase thunder power, armor power, and other items); dark mirrors (for warping to bosses or skeet shooting-style mini-games); and larger characters (meaning Vince and Paul are bigger targets). In comparison to Tradewest's 1986 arcade game (which was simply called *Victory*

Road), the NES port has less detailed graphics and horribly inferior voice effects. The coin-op game also benefited from rotary controls.

Ikari Warriors III: The Rescue

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Overhead View Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

A port of Tradewest's *Ikari III: The Rescue* (arcade, 1989), this game unwisely removes most of the shooting action of the first two entries in the series and replaces it with mere punching and kicking (roundhouse kicks and jump kicks). Grenades and machine guns can be found, but ammo is severely limited. Other weapons to pick up include oil drums (which kill all onscreen enemies) and rocks. Once again, there are a variety of soldiers to kill, but, thanks to an underwater level, this game adds scuba divers to the mix. Other enemies include ninjas, tanks, knife men, an armored train, and more. *Ikari Warriors III* has better animation, more detailed jungle scenery, and more realistic characters than the previous games in the series. All three feature an overhead viewpoint and unlimited continues (via codes Up, Right, A in this game and A, B, B, A in the first two).

Image Fight

PUBLISHER: Irem. DEVELOPER: Irem. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Despite scaled back graphics (in terms of detail, depth, and richness of coloring), *Image Fight* is a solid port of Irem's 1988 arcade game. The action, though enjoyable, is standard for the genre, with players piloting an OF-1 Fighter ship up the screen, firing away at robots, cannons, alien ships, and other enemies (including Medusa) while avoiding their fire and various types of terrain (including walls). Whether flying over land, sea, or the enemy base, or through an elevator shaft or an abandoned mine, the view is from overhead. At any time, players can toggle between four different flying speeds. Special weapons to pick up include shields, reflecting balls, seeking lasers, a five-way

gun, drilling lasers, rippling lasers, a v-cannon, seeking missiles, and a side shooter.

The Immortal

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts. DEVELOPER: Sandcastle. Isometric Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

The Immortal for the NES is based on Will Harvey's notoriously difficult computer classic (1990). Armed with fireballs and a pack for carrying amulets, shrinking potions, and other items, a wizard must brave a dark, dreary dungeon filled with spiders, bats, pit traps, and other obstacles. Gameplay is largely trial-and-error, with players trying (again and again, inevitably) to use the right items at the right times and in the right places. Monster battles, which are comprised of jabbing, slashing, and ducking right and left, switch the action to an up-close perspective. Includes password feature. An impressive port, but less so than the graphically superior Genesis version.

Impossible Mission II

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Novotrade. Non-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

A faithful port of the Epyx computer game, *Impossible Mission II* puts players in the role of a 25th century sleuth, who must infiltrate the stronghold of mad genius Elvin Atombender (located within the six-story StarCom International Building) and shutdown his mainframe computer, which has spread a nasty virus that could unleash nuclear Armageddon upon the world. Armed with a pocket computer, players must run, jump, duck, climb stairs, ride elevators, and search for various items, including: time extender icons; security codes (for entering other rooms); safes (which contain musical key data sequences that must be recorded); and terminal commands (for turning on lights, setting bombs and mines, disengaging enemy droids, and resetting moving platforms). Like its predecessor (*Impossible Mission*, which didn't make it to the NES), the action is a nice mix of platforming and puzzle solving. *Impossible Mission II* was also released by SEI. Both versions are unlicensed, and they play the same.

The Incredible Crash Dummies

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

Based on the Tyco toy line, which was patterned after the government-sponsored crash dummies used to test car safety, *The Incredible Crash Dummies* puts players, as Slick or Spin (depending on the stage), through eight levels of action: Crash Test Center, Sewer, Big Top, Fun House, Warehouse, Pier, Wrecking Yard, and Junkman's Lair. Each dummy rolls along on a unicycle-like wheel, meaning control is a bit tricky. The dummies use an air gun for stunning tanks, rats, flying fish, and other enemies, and an oil gun for killing them. Platforming activities include collecting traffic cones, jumping over gaps, rolling on moving sidewalks, flipping switches, bouncing on tires, avoiding beach balls, and more. Also released (in varying forms) for the Game Boy, Game Gear, Genesis, and SNES.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (Taito)

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1991.

The first of two NES games based on the third film in the *Indiana Jones* series, the Taito version of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is divided into several distinctive genres, each partitioned by a cut scene that lets players decide what to do next (such as get cross, rescue Dad, or find Marcus). In The Cross of Coronado and Castle Brunwald, Indy runs, jumps, ducks, climbs ladders or stairs, and punches, kicks, and whips bad guys. In the jigsaw puzzle-like Catacombs of Venice, players must reassemble scattered pieces of the Grail. In The Desert of Iskenderun, Indy battles enemy soldiers atop a tank while trying not to fall off. Viewed from overhead, The Road to Berlin has Indy driving a motorcycle up the screen, whipping, bumping, or jumping on enemies while avoiding minefields, washed-out bridges, and machine gun nests. Also viewed from overhead, The Lost Temple finds Indy walking around a path of letters, spelling out "Jehovah" as he goes.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (UBI Soft)

PUBLISHER: UBI Soft Entertainment. DEVELOPER: NMS Software. Side-Scrolling Platform/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1993.

The second of two NES cartridges based on Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), this game puts players in the title role of the popular adventurer, who must rescue his father and find the Holy Grail. Armed with his fists and the ability to run, jump, and climb, Indy must battle his way through six levels: Exploring the Caves, Escaping on the Train, Entering the Catacombs, Assault on Brunwald Castle, Escape from the Airship, and The Three Trials. To add to his arsenal, Indy can grab a whip (beginning in level two) and a gun (beginning in level four). Enemies and obstacles include rats, giraffes, armed men, Indians, knives, bullets, circular saws, fireballs, and more. Neither NES *Last Crusade* title was a classic, but this version is particularly bad, thanks to short-range punching, poor controls, and Game Boy-like graphics. A port of the 1989 computer game. Similar to the Genesis version, but with more levels and less color.

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

With *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, fans of the 1985 film get to play the role of their favorite whip-wielding adventurer. Indy's mission is to free enslaved children working in mines, which involves exploring caves, climbing ladders, sliding down chutes, walking on conveyor belts, riding mine carts, swinging across gaps, and more. Freed slaves award players with keys, jewels, map pieces, hats (extra lives), arrows pointing to secret doors, and weapons (swords, guns, and TNT). There are 12 levels, each filled with rats, snakes, spikes, spiders, lava monsters, guards, boulders, and other enemies and obstacles. *Temple of Doom* is based on Atari's 1985 arcade game, which had digitized voice effects and superior graphics (conversely, the NES version added jumping and more items to the formula). The

original Tengen release is unlicensed, but Mindscape published an official (though identical) rendition later the same year.

Infiltrator

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Chris Gray Enterprises. Flight Combat Simulator/Stealth, 1 player. 1990.

Infiltrator puts players in the role of Jimbo-Baby McGibbits, who must infiltrate the headquarters of the Mad Leader. Jimbo starts off in his DHX-3 Attack Chopper, which he must fly to a secret enemy base. The action is viewed from inside the cockpit, with players firing 20 mm cannons and heat-seeking missiles at enemy fighters. The chopper sections are complex as numerous factors must be considered, including speed, engine damage, battery heat, fuel, altitude, RPMs, chaff (metal strips that are dropped to fool radar-guided missiles), flares, radio, turbo engines, whisper mode (fly and land silently), messages, altimeter, defenses, and more. Once a base is reached, players must undertake timed ground missions, which involve searching buildings, wearing disguises, avoiding capture by enemy guards, using various inventory items (sleeping gas, gas grenades, identification papers, a mine detector, and explosives), unlocking doors, and more. Based on *Infiltrator* and *Infiltrator II* for the Commodore 64.

Iron Tank: The Invasion of Normandy

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Vertical Scrolling Tank Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Set during World War II (circa 1944), *Iron Tank* finds the United Forces looking to gain an advantage in their mission to establish a beachhead, break through the front lines, and infiltrate and destroy enemy headquarters. Enter Paul, a special forces veteran who must pilot the titular tank up 19 top-down areas, firing away at foot soldiers, grenadiers, tanks, trains, gunboats, fighter planes, fortified bases, and other enemies. The Iron Tank is upgradeable with armor piercing bullets, long range fire, rapid fire, full screen bombs, and increased explosive power (selectable via a sub screen), and players can point the sturdy vehicle's turret in

eight directions. Some may find the action to be a tad on the sluggish side, but the slow, steady pace is typical (and, at least in this case, desirable) for a tank shooter. Multiple pathways and substantial challenges ensure solid replay value. Similar to *Vindicators* (NES), but with no keys or fuel to worry about.

IronSword: Wizards & Warriors II

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

This sequel to *Wizards & Warriors* adds a few new elements to the enemy-stabbing, platform-jumping action, including a gambling mini-game and shops where players can purchase keys, food, armor, and magic spells, the latter of which enable players to gain speed, become invisible, turn enemies into food or coins, and more. Spells are especially useful against Elementals, which are also new to the series. The box for *IronSword: Wizards & Warriors II* sports a painting of muscle-bound model Fabio, making the game a potential collector's item for romance novel enthusiasts. Includes password feature. Followed by: *Wizards & Warriors III*, *Kuros: Visions of Power* (NES).

Isolated Warrior

PUBLISHER: NTVIC. DEVELOPER: VAP. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

In this testosterone-infused shooter, players walk, motorbike, and even ride a hovercraft through seven lengthy levels of explosive action, using beams (including a spread gun) and bombs to thwart an alien invasion. Weapon power-ups are plentiful, as are enemies, so there's no shortage of shooting action. Barriers, such as gaps (which can be jumped over), pools of acid, gun emplacements, rocks, and destroyed buildings, are commonplace as well, helping make for a harrowing trek. In terms of audio/visuals, *Isolated Warrior* is nothing less than spectacular, boasting rich coloring, a nice assortment of highly detailed aliens, and a robust musical score. The game, which would look (and sound) at home on the more powerful Sega Genesis, is viewed from an isometric perspective, meaning the action progresses at an angle. Includes password feature.

Ivan “Ironman” Stewart’s Super Off Road

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare.
Rally/Off-Road Racing, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A marvelous port of Leland’s 1989 arcade game, *Ivan “Ironman” Stewart’s Super Off Road* for the NES one-ups the coin-op classic by allowing four-player action (compared to three). The arcade game benefits from steering wheel control and somewhat sharper graphics, but Nintendo fans should be pleased with this fine off-road racer. Viewed from an overhead/angled perspective, the game has players racing their truck around eight different non-scrolling dirt tracks, turning sharp corners, driving over bumps and hills, dodging puddles and mud holes, and avoiding barriers and other trucks. Winning races grants players money for upgrading their trucks with nitro speed boosts and better tires, shocks, acceleration, and top speed. Nitros and money can also be picked up along the tracks. After races, beautiful, big-breasted women congratulate the winners. Obviously influenced by *Super Sprint* (arcade, 1986), this game was released as *Super Off Road* for the Game Boy, Atari Lynx, Game Gear, Genesis, and SNES. Followed by: *Super Off Road: The Baja* (SNES).

Jack Nicklaus’ Greatest 18 Holes of Major Championship Golf

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Sports/Golf, 1–4 players (alternating). 1990.

Jack Nicklaus’ Greatest 18 Holes features the Golden Bear’s dream golf course, which includes such hot spots as #8 at Pebble Beach, #13 at Augusta, and #12 at Royal Lytham. Nicklaus himself is a playable character, along with seven fictional golfers of varying skills. Unlike certain computer versions of the game, Castle Pines Golf Club and the Golf Club at Desert Mountain are not included. However, the NES cart does offer plenty of golfing goodness, including club selection, multiple viewpoints, hazards (trees, water, roughs, wind, and sand), hooking, slicing, a three-tap swing system, a driving range, practice modes, and more. A golfing legend, the Golden Bear appears in a

number of other video games, including *Jack Nicklaus’ Power Challenge Golf* (Genesis), *Jack Nicklaus’ Turbo Golf* (TurboGrafx-16), and *Jack Nicklaus Golf* (Game Boy, SNES).

Jackal

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Dozens of American prisoners of war remain on enemy soil, and it is up the player — a Green Beret at the wheel an all-terrain, super-mobile attack jeep — to rescue them. After parachuting down to the Cambodian border, players must drive around six hostile territories, shooting tanks, cannons, light infantry, mobile missile launchers, troop transports, sniper rafts, shark attack submarines, and other enemies. To rescue POWs, players must destroy the barracks where they are being held, pick up said prisoners, and drive them to the heliport. The jeep, which can drive in all directions, is armed with a machine gun that can only fire straight up the screen. Players can also throw hand grenades and fire bazookas, the latter of which are obtained by rescuing POWs and powering up. Like most Konami cartridges, *Jackal* exudes quality and playability. Predictably, the original arcade game (Konami, 1986) has sharper graphics and more explosive sound effects.

Jackie Chan’s Action Kung Fu

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1991.

Jackie Chan’s Action Kung Fu finds a cartoonish, big headed version of the titular martial arts expert walking, jumping, punching, and kicking his way through ninjas, swordsmen, birds, and other enemies and obstacles. Pummeling frogs grants Jackie such power-ups as life points, a tornado attack, a sky attack, and a spin kick. The basic action is rather generic in nature, and the TurboGrafx version has richer visuals, but *Action Kung Fu* for the NES is nevertheless an entertaining, nice looking game. Especially cool are the bosses, such as the Combat Spider and the Shaolin Giant. Chan also appeared in *Jackie Chan Stuntmaster* (PlayStation), *Jackie Chan Adventures* (PS2), and *Jackie*

Chan Adventures: Legend of the Dark Hand (Game Boy Advance).

James Bond Jr.

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Eurocom Developments. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the cartoon series (1991–1992), *James Bond Jr.* puts players in the role of James Bond's nephew, who must rescue a weapons scientist being held hostage by the evil S.C.U.M. Lord. During his mission, the young super spy will jump on platforms, leap over long gaps, climb ladders, and use a gun, bombs, and flares to battle bad guys. In addition, Bond must open safes, disable missiles (similar to solving Rubik's Cube-like puzzles), don scuba gear and a bubble gun, go airborne with a jet pack, and attack enemies as a werewolf. Helpful items to collect include extra ammo, shields, werewolf potion, clocks (extra time), and hamburgers (health). The characters and levels are very nicely drawn and detailed, making the game more sophisticated in appearance than most 8-bit titles. *James Bond Jr.* for the NES is much different than its Super NES counterpart, which is a side-scrolling platformer with brighter coloring and a more lighthearted look and feel. Includes password feature.

Jaws

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Westone. Adventure/Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Loosely based on *Jaws: The Revenge* (1987), which was the fourth and final film in the famous franchise, *Jaws* for the NES features four types of gameplay: a pointless overhead sequence where players pilot a sailboat until it inadvertently hits an unseen Jaws; a dull underwater scenario in which players use a boat, a diver, or a mini-sub to gather conch shells and shoot sea creatures; a fairly decent bonus scene involving the bombing of jellyfish with an airplane; and an anti-climactic first-person finale in which players must ram Jaws with a boat. Jaws has a much more prominent role in the bloody *Jaws Unleashed* (PS2, Xbox), which puts players in the role of the hungry shark.

Jeopardy!

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Based on the popular TV game show, *Jeopardy!* for the NES is missing host Alex Trebek, but the theme song is recognizable, and there more than 2,000 trivia questions in over 400 categories, meaning repeats are relatively few and far between. As play begins, three contestants are shown standing behind podiums (the computer fills in if only one or two humans are playing), and then the view switches to a board showing six different categories. Each category is at the top of a column, with each column containing a series of progressively higher dollar amounts. After a category and dollar amount has been selected, a trivia question is posed, and within a set time limit players must answer the question by guiding a cursor along an alphabet to spell out the word or words. The controller functions may seem tedious to casual gamers, but they get the job done, and the contestants react animatedly to various situations. Daily Double, Double Jeopardy!, and Final Jeopardy! are included. Also released for the Genesis, SNES, and numerous other systems.

Jeopardy! Junior Edition

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Jeopardy! Junior Edition plays just like the regular version of *Jeopardy!*, but the trivia questions are kid-friendly (the game is recommended for children ages seven and up), and the contestants themselves are kids. There are nearly 2,000 questions divided into such categories as Weapons, Veggies, Numbers, Paul Bunyan, and Muppet Movies (there are more than 400 categories in all). As in real *Jeopardy!*, the action is timed, and players who think they know the answer to a question should try to be the first to buzz in so they can answer it (actually, as *Jeopardy!* fans know, the questions are posed as answers and the answers take the form of questions).

Jeopardy! 25th Anniversary Edition

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Produced to celebrate the popular TV game show's silver anniversary, *Jeopardy! 25th Anniversary Edition* plays just like the first *Jeopardy!* game for the NES, but offers almost 2,000 new trivia questions. Categories include Historical Events, Sports Facts, Animals, The Bible, Human Body, Birds, Aussie English, and many more. As in previous editions of the game, certain misspellings are accepted while others are considered to be the wrong answer. Unfortunately, despite the celebratory nature of the game, host Alex Trebek, who wouldn't show up in a console video game until the Genesis and SNES versions of *Jeopardy!*, remains missing in action. Followed by: *Super Jeopardy!* (NES).

The Jetsons: Cogswell's Caper

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the classic sci-fi cartoon, *The Jetsons* is a mediocre platformer that puts players in the role of family patriarch George, who must run, jump, and fly (via jet pack) through 12 levels of play, including a Packing Factory, a Botanical Garden, and a Mining Factory. To thwart robots, archers, UFOs, and other enemies, George can pick up and throw blocks. Throughout the levels, George must pull switches to operate elevators, turn on lights, activate teleporters, and more. Fellow cast mates Rosie, Astro, Elroy, Jane, and Judy are on hand to dish out advice, magnetic boots, power packs, a jet board, and a remote control. The futuristic family also appeared in *The Jetsons' Way With Words* (Intellivision), *The Jetsons: Robot Panic* (Game Boy), and *The Jetsons: Invasion of the Planet Pirates* (SNES).

Jim Henson's Muppet Adventure: Chaos at the Carnival

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Mind's Eye Technology. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1990.

The evil Dr. Grump has kidnapped Miss Piggy, forcing the Muppets to conquer four diabolical carnival rides. Lost in Space Ride has *Asteroids*-like controls (rotate, thrust, fire), but the action scrolls to the right, with Gonzo flying

in his ship while avoiding and shooting satellites, space dogs, and asteroids. In Amazing Ice Cream Maze, Fozzie walks around a series of mazes, throwing bones, banana peels, and hearts at carnival barkers. Viewed from overhead, Crash Car Course scrolls to the right, with Animal riding through an obstacle course, running over flags while avoiding booby traps, oil slicks, and rubber band bumpers. A poor man's *Toobin'*, The Raging River Ride has Kermit propelling his boat down a river, catching buoys and periscopes while avoiding rocks, logs, and dead ends. Beating all four rides takes players to a side-scrolling platform stage where Kermit must tickle Grumpasaurus with a feather in order to rescue Piggy.

Jimmy Connors Tennis

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft. DEVELOPER: NMS Entertainment. Sports/Tennis, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

Endorsed by one of the greatest tennis players of all time, *Jimmy Connors Tennis* is a typical video game version of the popular sport, giving gamers a viewpoint behind the court and slightly above the player on that end. Shots include lob, drop, normal, strong, forehand, and backhand, and players can use the D-pad to influence the direction and depth of hits. Modes of play include Practice (beginner, intermediate, advance, or smash play) and Tournament (beginner, intermediate, or advanced), the latter of which features 16 different countries and three types of courts: grass, hard, and clay. The tennis players are nicely animated (if similar in design), and the computer poses a substantial challenge, even in the easier modes of play. Followed by: *Jimmy Connors Pro Tennis Tour* (SNES).

Joe & Mac

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Elite Systems. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

Based on the arcade game *Caveman Ninja* (Data East, 1991), *Joe & Mac* for the NES is missing the two-player simultaneous mode, which is something the Genesis and SNES versions kept intact. And, despite the name "Mac"

in the title, he is not a playable character. The prehistoric action finds Joe running, jumping on platforms, and throwing stone axes, flints, boomerangs, fireballs, and stone wheels at baby pteranodons, archaeopteryx, zephyrosaurus, electric flying fish, tyrant triffids, and helirock bombs, the latter dropped by Caveman Crowswing from his “helirockter.” Jumping and throwing a weapon at the same time is a common tactic, and Joe can eat food to restore his energy and score points. The game takes place in 10 stone-age areas spread across five levels: Volcanic Valley of Valor, Ocean of Silurian, Rapids of Ramapithecus, Bonseville Basin, and Petrified Forest of Fossileons. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *Joe & Mac Returns* (arcade) and *Joe & Mac 2: Lost in the Tropics* (SNES).

John Elway’s Quarterback

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare.
Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1989.

Endorsed by the famous Denver Bronco, *John Elway’s Quarterback* scrolls vertically and is viewed from a top-down perspective, setting it apart from the pack. Also unusual is that players use an arrow to aim passes and kicks. Gamers can call six defensive and nine offensive plays, the latter of which can be changed on the fly. Diving tackles are an important part of the game, and players can jump to intercept passes. There are 14 different fictional teams, but it’s always red vs. blue, giving the game limited visual appeal (poor animation doesn’t help). *John Elway’s Quarterback* is based on the four-player *John Elway’s Team Quarterback*, which Leland released to the arcades in 1988.

Jordan vs Bird: One on One

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare.
Sports/Basketball, 1–4 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1989.

Adapted from the 1988 computer game, *Jordan vs Bird: One on One* lets players control NBA greats Michael Jordan and Larry Bird as they face off against one another. Approximating reality to some degree, Jordan’s specialty is dunking while Bird’s expertise is knocking

down three-pointers. Players are penalized for traveling, shot clock violations, charging, blocking, and failing to clear the ball, and there are four selectable difficulty levels and period lengths. Gameplay is slow, but fairly entertaining, and the graphics are clear and nicely animated and detailed. The cartridge includes a 3-Point Contest and a Slam Dunk Contest, the latter of which employs a hard-to-perfect maneuver where Jordan must take off from a specific location on the court for each particular dunk. The game, which has its roots in the groundbreaking *Julius Erving and Larry Bird Go One-On-One* (1984, PC), was followed by EA’s *Jordan vs Bird: Super One on One* (Genesis).

Joshua and the Battle of Jericho

PUBLISHER: Wisdom Tree. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Maze/Maze Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

Joshua and the Battle of Jericho uses the same game engine as *Crystal Mines*, but is retrofitted with a biblical theme. Players guide Joshua through a series of 100 timed levels, tooting his trumpet (i.e. shooting his weapon) to clear away enemies and obstacles, including Hittite citizens, Israelite discontent (textured squares), pieces of the Jericho wall (circles), and temporary boundaries (gray squares). Joshua can also drop items on enemies and grab numerous prizes, including: the Lord’s direction (for extended trumpet gunfire); ram’s horns (for eliminating stubborn enemies); shovels (for shoveling through virtually all objects); and the Lord’s favor (temporary invincibility). The objective in each level is to collect five questions (the game includes 250 trivia questions based on the book of *Joshua*), gather all the iron, brass, silver, and gold, and find the exit. Includes digitized speech and a password feature. Unlicensed. Also released for the Genesis (with more color, but no speech). See also: *Exodos: Journey to the Promised Land* (NES).

Journey to Silius

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Produced under the working title of “The Terminator,” but changed when Sunsoft lost

the *Terminator* movie license, *Journey to Silius* isn't as well known as *Mega Man* or *Contra*, but it deserves a place on the shelf next to those great shooters. Gamers guide a vengeful boy through five futuristic stages, using six different weapons (hand gun, shot gun, machine gun, homing missiles, laser rifle, and grenade launcher) to destroy such enemies as flying warbots, humanoid laser cannons, and gigantic bosses (including a helicopter, a spaceship, and an android). Stages include: A Deserted Space Colony in Space Age 0373, Underground Concourse, Terrorist Headquarters, Inside the Terrorist's Spaceship, and Inside the Terrorist's Spaceship Factory.

Joust

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Joust for the NES is a solid port of Williams' 1982 arcade classic, despite slightly downgraded visuals, weaker sound effects, superfluous intro music, and missing "survival wave" levels. The soft, wing-flapping accuracy of the controls remains intact, as do the basic objectives. Players must keep their knight-mounted ostrich aloft and out of harm's way in order to attack enemy Buzzard Riders. To defeat a Buzzard Rider, the player's mount must be positioned higher when the two make contact. Players should beware the pterodactyls, which must be met head on (but are better avoided), and The Troll of the Lava Pits, who lurks below and can reach up and pluck the player's ostrich out of the air. Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Atari 7800, and Atari Lynx. *Joust* spawned a sequel (*Joust 2: Survival of the Fittest* for the arcades) and at least two imitators (*Balloon Fight* for the arcades and NES and *Sir Lancelot* for the Atari 2600 and ColecoVision).

The Jungle Book

PUBLISHER: Virgin Games. DEVELOPER: Eurocom Entertainment Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1994.

Based on Disney's 1967 feature film (which was inspired by Rudyard Kipling's "Mowgli"

stories), *The Jungle Book* for the NES puts players in the role of man-cub Mowgli as he works his way through the jungle and to the village, throwing bananas at monkeys, jumping fish, crocodiles, snakes, scorpions, and other enemies along the way. Weapon power-ups include double-power bananas, boomerang bananas, a pea shooter, and a mask of invulnerability. In addition to battling baddies, Mowgli swings on vines, jumps on platforms, collects gems and berries, bounces on see-saws (to reach high areas), dodges spikes and falling rocks, and more. Levels are timed, and the fun, nicely illustrated, side-scrolling action exhibits plenty of vertical scrolling to allow Mowgli to scale trees and cliffs and otherwise explore all the areas of each level. Also released for the Game Boy, Genesis, and SNES.

Jurassic Park

PUBLISHER: Ocean. DEVELOPER: Ocean. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter/Adventure, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1993.

Jurassic Park for the NES turns Steven Spielberg's 1993 film into a satisfying shooter/adventure game. Players guide paleontologist Dr. Alan Grant as he runs around shooting and bombing dinosaurs while avoiding volcanic rock, sparks, electrified gates, and other obstacles. Grant must also travel up river on an inflatable raft, collect dinosaur eggs to earn pass cards for entering buildings and accessing computer terminals, guide Tim Murphy (John Hammond's grandson) through a Triceratops stampede, and more. The game is somewhat similar to its SNES counterpart, but with inferior (though still nice) graphics and no first-person segments. Also released for the Game Boy.

Kabuki-Quantum Fighter

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: Human Corporation. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

In the year 2056, Earth's defense computer has been infected by a virus, and it is up to the Quantum Fighter to save the day. Converted to raw data and transferred into the computer's circuits (which include such oddities as a river

and imbedded monster faces), the hero must battle the infestation, which consists of such enemies as robots, birds, mutants, blue penguins, humanoid lizards, flame throwers, and snapping teeth. A whip-like Kabuki hair attack is the primary weapon, giving the game something of a *Castlevania* feel, but players can also punch, kick, shoot fireballs, lob quantum bombs, and wield a fusion gun and a remote control bolo. *Kabuki-Quantum Fighter* comprises six timed stages, most of which are fairly brief. The platforming action, which features standard jumps as well as flips, includes such typical constructs as icy platforms and conveyor belts.

Karate Champ

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East.
Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Karate Champ for the NES outfits the gamer in traditional white karate clothes, facing an opponent who is clad in red. Fighters can pull off a variety of moves, including lunge punch, low punch, front kick, back kick, round kick, jumping kick, foot sweep, squat, block, and more. Rounds last 30 seconds or until a fighter gets two points. As in most modern fighting games, *Karate Champ* employs a best two-out-of-three format. There are nine fighting locations, each with different backgrounds, such as palm trees, cliffs, or a desert. At the end of each match, the victor enters a special bonus round in which knocking down flying objects earns extra points. Thanks to poor controls and choppy animation, *Karate Champ* is hopelessly dated, but it's a solid port of a historically important title, namely Data East's 1984 arcade classic, which was one of the first side-view, one-on-one fighting games.

The Karate Kid

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: LJN.
Fighting/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players
(alternating, simultaneous). 1987.

The Karate Kid for the NES incorporates scenes from the first two *Karate Kid* movies and offers two types of gameplay: one-on-one fighting and side-scrolling combat, the latter of which includes platforms and such obstacles

as flying sticks, birds, and gusting winds. Daniel-San performs standard punches and kicks as well as two special moves: the drum punch and his trademark crane kick (which Ralph Macchio performed so memorably in the 1984 feature film). Bonus stages find Daniel avoiding a swinging hammer, breaking ice blocks, and catching flies with chopsticks.

Karnov

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East.
Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1
player. 1988.

Karnov for the NES is a nice port of Data East's 1987 arcade game, but it does have some differences. The title character, a circus strongman, can take two hits instead of just one. Levels four through eight have been redesigned, and the final boss is a three-headed dragon instead of a wizard. Gameplay is essentially the same as *Karnov* runs, jumps, and shoots (single, double, and triple fireballs) his way through nine levels of soldiers, demons, gargoyles, pigeons, tricky platforms, and other enemies and obstacles. Throughout the game, *Karnov* can collect such helpful items as boots (for double jumping power), boomerangs, wings, a shield, a swimming mask, and ladders. His ultimate goal is to retrieve the Lost Treasure of Babylon and defeat the evil Ryu (a huge dragon, not the *Street Fighter* character).

Kick Master

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-
Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

In *Kick Master*, players guide the titular hero as he runs, jumps, squats, and kicks his way through eight areas, including Witches' Forest, Cavern of No Return, and Belzed's First Stronghold. The *Kick Master* begins the game equipped with three fighting moves, but can add to his arsenal an assortment of fun, easy-to-use combat maneuvers, including sliding kicks, double front kicks, double butterfly kicks, and blazing flip kicks. In addition to fighting skills, *Kick Master* can acquire such magic powers as bouncing bulbs (fire balls), magic boots (for walking on otherwise deadly surfaces), lightning, earthquakes, harpy flying

(flight), pulse waves, force shields, and twin power (a shadow decoy). The game also has RPG-like qualities in which collecting coins raises the player's experience points, which in turn increases maximum hit and magic points. Enemies include bats, frogs, Grim Reapers, big-eyed monsters, rat soldiers, karate soldiers, and more. Despite uneven audio/visuals, *Kick Master* offers plenty of kicks for the action-oriented gamer. Includes password feature.

Kickle Cubicle

PUBLISHER: Irem. DEVELOPER: Irem. Maze/Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1990.

Viewed from overhead, *Kickle Cubicle* is a charming maze puzzler starring a baby-faced fellow who walks around frozen fantasy lands (Garden, Fruit, Cake, and Toy), rescuing innocents trapped in dream bags. Kickle can freeze cutesy enemy creatures into ice cubes and kick them into the water to create ice pathways to otherwise unreachable areas. Enemies include such characters as Myrtle the turtle, who uses her shell like a drill, and the Equalizer, who shoots cannon balls. Additional elements, including hammers (which turn cubes and knock enemies away), springs (which bounce cubes across the screen), and rocks (which stop cubes), fill the game with strategic challenges. Includes password feature. Similar to: *Pengo* (arcade, Atari 5200) and *The Adventures of Lolo* (NES).

Kid Icarus

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Set during an era “when Gods and Man lived in harmony,” *Kid Icarus* was an A-list title for the NES that failed where such franchises as *Super Mario Bros.* and *The Legend of Zelda* succeeded. Unlike the latter two games, which are user friendly, *Kid Icarus* is frustratingly difficult, thanks in part to tricky platform jumps and

the limitations of the titular angel's primary weapon, which fires short-range arrows. Depending on the level (Underworld, Overworld, Skyworld, or Palace in the Sky), the action scrolls horizontally or vertically (up only, meaning falling to your death is easy to do), with players shooting an assortment of oddball beasts and mythological creatures. Items, which include flaming arrows, mirror shields, protective crystals, and more, are hard to come by and are unusable if *Kid Icarus* is low on strength. Backgrounds are solid black, but the columns, creatures, and other visuals are nicely rendered. Along with *Metroid*, *Kid Icarus* was the first video game cartridge to include a password feature for saving progress. Followed by: *Kid Icarus: Of Myths and Monsters* (Game Boy).

Kid Klown in Night Mayor World

PUBLISHER: Kemco. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Released late in the life of the NES, *Kid Klown* is a typical side-scroller (run, duck, jump on platforms) with colorful graphics,



Four popular NES cartridges: *Kid Icarus*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II—The Arcade Game*, *Ikari Warriors*, and *Battletoads*.

charming music, and lighthearted gameplay. One unusual thing about the game is the weapon of choice wielded by the blue-haired protagonist: balloons. Not only can balloons be thrown at the various fish, hedgehogs, snakes, bugs, and other enemies, they can be used to float, jump higher, and find hidden treasures and doors. Levels include Forest, Toyland, Beanstalk, Ice, Candy Land, and Castle. At the end of each level is a bonus stage, in which the titular clown, viewed from behind, throws strawberries at hearts and fruit to earn energy and extra lives. Beating the game reveals a secret code for unlocking a harder mode of play. Followed by: *Kid Klown in Crazy Chase* (SNES).

Kid Kool and the Quest for the Seven Wonder Herbs

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

In *Kid Kool*, the chubby, dorky looking title character (who looks nothing like the cool kid on the box) must journey through seven levels (including Mountain Bulb and Aridian Desert), running, jumping, pole-vaulting (a minor part of the game), and battling creatures with such names as Snapping Dragon, Wooly Sprite, Doorgnat, and Synthetico. The Kid can jump on most of his enemies, but his most effective weapon is Wicky, a short, two-legged, mop top little creature who frequently appears along the ground and can be picked up and thrown. Other helpful items include extra time and temporary invincibility. Like Sonic the Hedgehog, Kid skids when he comes to a running stop. Gameplay resembles *Super Mario Bros.*, but is nowhere near as clever or as full of secrets and surprises. It's hard to believe this juvenile game was produced by the same company responsible for *Golgo 13*.

Kid Niki: Radical Ninja

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Using such dated terminology as “rad dude” and employing such side-scrolling staples as rescuing a girlfriend, jumping over water-

filled gaps, and jumping on rock platforms that move up and down, *Kid Niki* is truly a product of its time. Players guide the titular, spike-haired hero through seven cartoon-like rounds (a forest, an icy world, and the like), using a spinning sword to battle birds, foxes, masked devils, flying kites, and other standard enemies, along with such memorable bosses as Death Breath and Stone Buddha. Despite spotty collision detection during boss fights, *Kid Niki* can be beaten within a half hour by most anyone with some degree of platforming experience. It's a fun game, though, and does a very nice job of imitating the original arcade version, which Irem released the previous year.

King Neptune's Adventure

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

In *King Neptune's Adventure*, players guide the titular merman as he endeavors to retrieve a stolen orb and eight valuable treasures. The good king swims up, down, right, and left, and he can shoot bouncing light shots, detonate bubble bombs, collect sea horses (for extra lives), and kill stingrays (to refill health). There are nine levels to journey through: King's Castle, The Maze, Open Ocean, Sunken Ship, Deep Sea, Dark Castle, Volcano, Atlantis, and Inner Chamber, each filled with such enemies as piranhas, jellyfish, crabs, dragons, and sharks. Some exploration is involved, and players must grab keys to open specific doors. The graphics are decent enough, but the game is marred by cheap hits and limited animation. Unlicensed.

King of Kings: The Early Years

PUBLISHER: Wisdom Tree. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

King of Kings is a surprisingly good platformer with nice graphics, solid gameplay, and perky renditions of “We Three Kings,” “Go Tell it on the Mountain,” and “What Child is This?” The game, one of several religious titles from Wisdom Tree, is divided into three selectable stages: The Wise Men, in which players ride a surprisingly agile camel while collecting gifts

for baby Jesus; Flight to Egypt, in which Joseph and Mary take baby Jesus to Egypt on a surprisingly nimble donkey; and Jesus and the Temple, which finds Jesus' parents looking for him. Depending on the level, the game has players: avoiding creatures (such as bees, scorpions, and mice); dodging falling objects (rocks, ice, spikes, and the like); jumping on ledges and platforms; spitting on or kicking enemies; and jumping over polar bears, chasms, and other obstacles. Health-replenishing Bible trivia appears at various points throughout.

King's Knight

PUBLISHER: Square. DEVELOPER: Square. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

At first glance, *King's Knight* looks like a role-playing game. However, it's actually a shooter, with players guiding a knight, a wizard, a monster, and a thief (one at a time) over mountains, towns, and islands, firing away at such enemies and obstacles as rocks, statues, mushrooms, and trees. Magical elements, which are hidden in the first four areas, are important for making it through the fifth and final level, where the characters band together and fight as a team. Standard power-ups include higher jumps, speed, shields, and firing strength. A minor effort by Square.

Kings of the Beach Professional Beach Volleyball

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Sports/Volleyball, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Arguably the best pre-'90s volleyball game, *Kings of the Beach* has bright, detailed graphics that include onlookers, beachcombers, oceanic backgrounds, and a nice side-view of the court and players. There are three types of serves (underhand, flat, and jump) and a variety of moves, including bump shots, spikes, blocks (including a special Kong block), feints, and dives. The two-on-two action, which is designed to mimic the playing styles of pros Sinjin Smith and Randy Stoklos, is accessible and fun. Players can even argue bad calls. The game has five stages: Coronado Beach, San Diego; Oak Street Beach, Chicago; Waikiki Beach,

Hawaii; Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro; and The Great White Beach, Australia. Multi-tap adapter required for four-player action.

King's Quest V

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Third-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1992.

Adapted from Sierra On-Line's point-and-click computer game, which was called *King's Quest V: Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder!* (the CD-ROM version of which boasted digitized voices and hand-painted backgrounds), *King's Quest V* for the NES puts players in the role of King Graham, who must journey through a magical world (including mountains, forests, deserts, and an island) to find his missing castle and royal family. Players guide Graham with the control pad, but an icon system is used for most functions. Icons include walk, quick travel, look, talk, action, item (view last item selected in inventory mode), inventory, and memory. Items to find include keys for opening doors, fish to feed a cat, a sled for riding down a mountain, a tambourine for getting rid of a snake, a stick to throw at a dog, and much more. Includes password feature. See also: *King's Quest: Quest for the Crown* (SMS).

Kirby's Adventure

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

The second installment in the popular Kirby franchise (following *Kirby's Dream Land* for the Game Boy), *Kirby's Adventure* is a cute, colorful, thoroughly enjoyable game. The titular pink puffball must make his way through seven levels (including Vegetable Valley, Ice Cream Island, and Rainbow Resort), jumping on platforms, swimming, floating over obstacles, and sliding into and shooting air pellets and water at enemies. Includes three mini-games: Quick Draw Kirby, Egg Catcher, and Crane Fever. The game introduced Kirby's trademark ability to swallow enemies and use their powers, which later showed up in such titles as *Kirby's Dream Land 3* (SNES) and *Super Smash Bros.* (Nintendo 64).

Kiwi Kraze

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

Despite missing the animated introductory screen, *Kiwi Kraze* is a very nice port of Taito's 1988 arcade game, which was called *The New Zealand Story*. Players guide a Kiwi bird named Tiki through zoos, caves, mountains, villages, fields, and a pirate ship (all based in New Zealand), rescuing his friends from cages, dodging obstacles (including spikes and fireballs), and shooting arrows at crabs, koalas, angle bats, sea anemones, flying teddy bears, flying robo kitties, flying spearmen, and other enemies. In addition to running, jumping, shooting, and swimming, Kiwi can find such

items as laser guns, balloons (for flying), magic watches (for freezing enemies), and magic staffs (for invincibility). Arrows and a radar map help players make it through the levels. *Kiwi Kraze* is a cute and charming, yet challenging game that platforming fans will thoroughly enjoy. Followed by: *New Zealand Story: Revolution* (Nintendo DS).

KlashBall

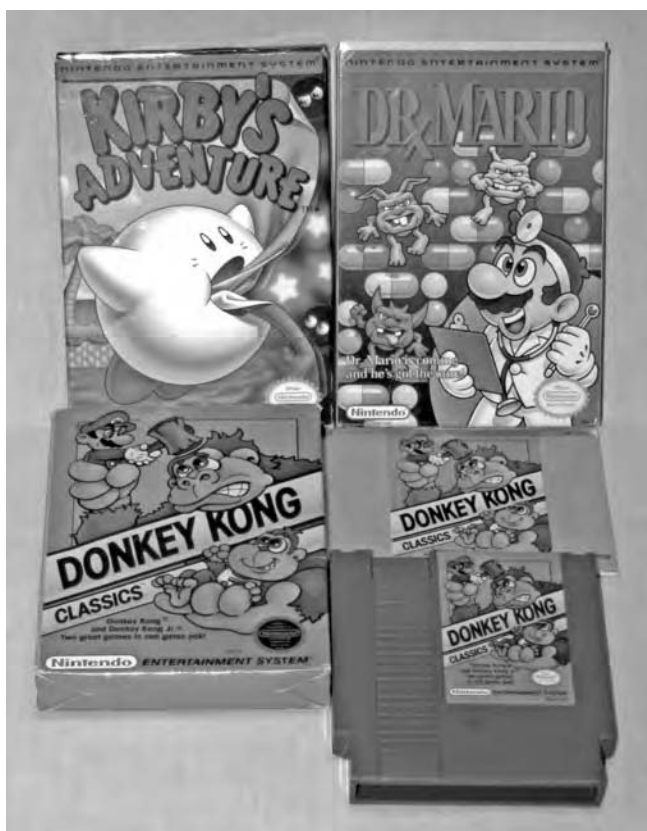
PUBLISHER: Sofel. DEVELOPER: The Bitmap Brothers. Sports/Futuristic, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

KlashBall is basically futuristic soccer, viewed from a top-down perspective. There are four players on either side (plus goalies), and the objective is to kick a small, bouncing ball into the opponent's goal positioned at the top or bottom of the screen. The action scrolls vertically, and the playfield is approximately two screens in size. The sides of the field have openings like the tunnels in *Pac-Man*, and if the ball goes through one, it will come out the other side. Unlike traditional soccer, *KlashBall* has bumpers (and other obstacles) and randomly appearing power-ups, letting players freeze the other team, create an extra goalie, protect their team from taking damage, and more. Standard moves include catching the ball and diving to block the ball or knock down an opponent. Adapted from *Speedball*, the 1988 computer game.

KLAX

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A port of Atari's *Tetris*-influenced arcade game, *KLAX* for the NES has players lining up descending (on a conveyor belt) tiles in rows, columns, and diagonals. Scoring a "KLAX" (three or more tiles of the same color lined up)



Three NES games starring popular Nintendo characters: *Kirby's Adventure*, which introduced Kirby's ability to swallow enemies; *Dr. Mario*, which put Nintendo's chief mascot in a *Tetris*-style game; and *Donkey Kong Classics*, which includes the arcade hits *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Jr.*

removes those tiles from the screen. Players catch each tile on a paddle and can drop it into position below, hold onto it (up to five tiles at a time), or hoist it back up to the conveyor belt. Combos are worth extra points, and certain objectives (such as getting a set number of diagonal KLAXs) must be fulfilled to complete each wave. Letting too many tiles get past the paddle ends the game. Atari's original coin-op classic (1989) has voice effects and crisper, more richly colored graphics, but the NES version does offer a *Pong*-type bonus game called Blob Ball. Thankfully, the two-player split-screen mode remains intact. Also released for the Atari 7800, TurboGrafx-16, Genesis, and other systems. Unlicensed.

Knight Rider

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Pack-In Video. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1989.

Based on the TV show (1982–1986) starring David Hasselhoff, *Knight Rider* is somewhat similar to *Spy Hunter*, but is viewed from inside the car instead of above the action. In addition, the roads twist and turn (ala *Pole Position*), and there are boss battles against semi trucks and jetcopters. Players drive the souped-up Trans-Am KITT (Knight Industries 2000) on 15 similar missions, shooting bullets, missiles, and lasers at certain vehicles while avoiding or collecting items (such as gasoline and shield repairs) from others. Courses are timed, and backgrounds reflect the various destination cities. Regrettably, there are no voice effects, meaning KITT can't spout wisecracks like he did in the television series. However, he can jump over enemy fire.

Krazy Kreature

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: American Video Entertainment. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

In *Krazy Kreature*, waves of small animals and other objects jump from off screen onto a rectangular or otherwise geometrical playfield, and it is up to the player to place the objects in rows of identical shapes in order to remove

them. A cursor is used for picking up the objects (one at a time) and placing them in the desired spot. The longer the row of objects removed (11 is the maximum), the more points players will score. Objects include cats, dogs, elephants, snails, cobras, chatter teeth, spheres, books, atomic clocks, fish faces, and more. Gamers can play solo or have a friend join in for cooperative or competitive action. There's no music during gameplay, the creatures are mono-colored and lacking in detail, and repetition sets in pretty quickly. However, the simple, fast-paced action will appeal to a certain breed of puzzle fan. Unlicensed.

The Krion Conquest

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

The Krion Conquest is similar to *Mega Man 2*, but with a little witch named Francesca in the starring role. Unlike *Mega Man*, Francesca can shoot upward (in addition to left and right), duck, and ride on a broom. There are five levels of play (Underground Base, Ice Base, Underwater Base, Sky Base, and Space Station), and the robot-shooting action is carried out via six types of selectable magic: normal, freeze, fire, ball (shots ricochet off walls), shield (forms barrier against enemies), and broom. Holding down the fire button charges up the magic gauge for unleashing super shots. Derivative, but fun.

Krusty's Fun House

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Audiogenic Software. Adventure Puzzle, 1 player. 1992.

A *Simpsons*-ized rendition of the computer game *Rat-Trap*, *Krusty's Fun House* finds the titular residence being overrun with rats, and the player must help the cantankerous clown lure the pesky creatures into traps set by Bart and Homer. This involves moving blocks (including spring blocks), trapping rats in jars, creating stair steps, finding secret passageways, throwing superballs, jumping on moving platforms, using fireworks, connecting pipes, placing fans (which blow the rats), breaking walls, and more. To ward off snakes, aliens, birds, and flying pigs, Krusty can throw custard pies. Includes password feature. Also released for the

Game Boy and Game Gear. Released as *Krusty's Super Fun House* for the Genesis and SNES.

Kung Fu

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1985.

Based on Irem's *Kung-Fu Master* arcade game (1984), *Kung Fu* has less detailed graphics than its coin-op counterpart, but handles better and has faithfully adapted (if repetitious) music. Players guide a kung fu expert named Thomas as he runs, jumps, punches, kicks (including jump kicks), and crouches his way through a barrage of stick fighters, giants, knife throwers, dragons, poisonous moths, and other enemies. The simple fighting action is dated, but this system launch title holds a special place in the hearts of many early NES owners. The game was released as *Kung-Fu Master* for the Atari 2600, Atari 7800, and Game Boy.

Kung-Fu Heroes

PUBLISHER: Culture Brain. DEVELOPER: Culture Brain. Maze/Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

When martial arts masters Jacky and Lee return to their homeland, they discover that Princess Min-Min has been kidnapped by monsters. To set things right, the cartoonish characters must battle through eight castles, each of which contains four single-screen rooms. As in *Bomberman*, the view is from overhead, and players can move their combatant up, down, right, and left. However, instead of setting bombs, Jack and Lee dish out kung fu punches and flying "moon sault" kicks against the many oddly amusing enemies (including Mr. Coffin, Medusa Cat, and Dragon Man) they will encounter. In addition, the duo can destroy boxes, blocks, and stones to reveal swords, candles (for seeing hidden traps), invincibility, projectile attacks, and other helpful items and power-ups. Destroying all the enemies in a maze opens a door to the next screen. Simple and accessible, *Kung-Fu Heroes* is charmingly retro. Based on Taiyo's *Chinese Hero* (arcade, 1984). Followed by: *Little Ninja Brothers* (NES) and *Super Ninja Boy* (SNES).

Laser Invasion

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Laser Invasion puts players in the cockpit of a helijet, guiding a cannon sight around the viewscreen (which takes up the top half of the playfield), shooting missiles at enemy fighters, aerial mines, and other enemies in the employ of Sheik Toxic Moron. Below the viewscreen is the control panel, where players monitor radar, remaining missiles, remaining optional equipment (fuel tanks, ground bombs, and chaff activated protection systems), air speed indicator, and damage meter. After destroying the Sheik's Vulture Squadron, players must land the helijet, shoot at enemies running around on the ground, and then enter the 3-D Confusion Maze, which, like the rest of the areas in the game, is viewed from a first-person perspective. A mapping system helps keep players from getting lost as they navigate the maze, collecting items and shooting bad guys. Although it can be played with a standard controller or a Nintendo Zapper gun, *Laser Invasion* is designed specifically for use with Konami's Laser Scope headset, which is a voice-activated optical targeting device.

Last Action Hero

PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Bits Studios. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1993.

Based on the feature film (1993), *Last Action Hero* puts players in the Arnold Schwarzenegger role of Jack Slater, who must walk (left and right only), crouch, punch, kick, and jump his way through seven levels, each inspired by a scene from the movie: Christmas in L.A., A Medieval Nightmare, A Date with Your Ex, The Car Chase, Leo's Funeral, Premiere Night, and Finale. Enemies to battle include knights, archers, bad cops, guerilla guards, psycho candy girls, The Ripper, and others who have broken out of the movie screen and entered the "real" world to unleash cheap hits on our hero. Health hearts are the only pick-up. The limited, strategy-deprived, punch-and-kick action is broken up somewhat by Jack having to ride elevators and jump on cars and trucks. Includes between-level cut scenes. The Genesis and SNES

versions include two driving levels. Also released for the Game Boy and Game Gear.

The Last Ninja

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

The Last Ninja puts players in the role of Armakuni, Master Ninja of 9th Century Feudal Japan, who gets transported to modern day Manhattan. On a mission to bring down the Evil Shogun Kunitoki, Armakuni must battle his way through six puzzle- and enemy-filled areas, each viewed from an isometric perspective. These include Central Park, The Street, The Sewers, The Office, The Mansion, and Final Battle. Armakuni can punch, kick, and jump, and he can use throwing stars, a sword, and other weaponry, but the key to success in this game is finding various objects (keys, bottles, staffs, credit cards, and the like) and discovering how to use them to get past such obstacles as locked doors, hidden entrances, alligators, and panthers. *The Last Ninja* is a port of the highly popular *The Last Ninja 2: Back with a Vengeance* (Commodore 64), but with some differences, including altered layouts, simplified combat, simplified graphics, and various sanitized elements (the enemy jugglers throw pins instead of knives, for example). Includes password feature.

The Last Starfighter

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Mindscape. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

With *The Last Starfighter*, Mindscape took the Commodore 64 classic *Uridium* (Hewson/Graftgold, 1986), slapped on a *The Last Starfighter* title screen from the 1984 feature film, and altered the soundtrack accordingly. Viewed from a top-down perspective, the game has players piloting a GunStar fighter ship over a series of what look like metallic outer space aircraft carriers, firing lasers at swirling formations of enemy ships and at ground-based targets. Unfortunately, flat visuals make it all too easy to misjudge and run into the targets. As in *Defender*, the ship can turn around and shoot in the other direction. Similar to *The Dreadnaught*

Factor for the Intellivision, but with inferior gameplay and no bombs.

Lee Trevino's Fighting Golf

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Sports/Golf, 1–4 players (alternating). 1988.

Offering clearly defined graphics, four distinctive golfers of varying abilities (including “Super Mex” himself), two 18-hole courses (Japanese and American), four modes of play (Stroke, Nassau, and Practice), and a three-tap swing system, *Lee Trevino's Fighting Golf* is a solid video representation of the popular sport. Players can select clubs, apply backspin to the ball, aim the ball high or low, and hit a draw, fade, or straight shot. Obstacles include wind, water, out of bounds, bunkers (standard and hard), and roughs (super, light, heavy, and deep). Like the two-player arcade version (SNK, 1988), multiple overhead and behind-the-golfer viewpoints are employed. Despite its title, there is no fighting. Golf fans wanting to fight should pick up *Ninja Golf* for the Atari 7800.

Legacy of the Wizard

PUBLISHER: Broderbund. DEVELOPER: Falcom. Adventure/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

Legacy of the Wizard is a quest to find four crowns in order to procure the DragonSlayer, which is a magical sword that can defeat a powerful dragon. Players guide members of the Drasle family (one at a time) through vast underground caverns (comprised of hundreds of rooms), climbing ladders, pushing blocks to solve puzzles, using magic to defeat monsters, and finding gold to purchase wings, keys, elixirs, jump shoes, fire rods (which increase range of current weapon), and other items. Each family member has different strengths and weaknesses, and each must be used to complete the quest, making for a complex adventure. Includes password feature.

The Legend of Kage

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

The Legend of Kage (pronounced kah-gay) for the NES is a mostly accurate port of Taito's

1984 arcade semi-classic. Armed with throwing stars and a sword that is severely limited in range (it can kill close-up bad guys and block enemy weaponry), the titular ninja must work his way through four extremely short scenes: Forest (climb and jump through trees, battle shinobis and yohbohs); Passage (run, swim, defeat 10 shinobis to reach the next level); Fortress (climb fortress walls, battle bomb-throwing shinobis); and Castle (battle through each castle level and rescue Kiri). Kage can jump far above the treetops, but once he is in the air, players cannot change his direction or cut short the jump, making for some frustrating deaths. Power-ups, including eight-way throwing knives and a shadow ninja, are hidden, as are certain exits. Kage moves with style, but most action fans will prefer a longer, more grounded adventure. Followed by: *The Legend of Kage 2* (Nintendo DS).

The Legend of Zelda

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1987.

Along with *Super Mario Bros. 3*, *The Legend of Zelda* is one of the most acclaimed titles in the NES library. Gamers guide the sword-slashing, shield-wielding Link across a vast overworld (consisting of 128 interconnected screens of forests, lakes, and mountains) and through nine underworld mazes, hacking away at a variety of creatures while searching for (or purchasing) keys, a ladder, a raft, a map, boomerangs, bombs, a whistle, a magic wand, and more. Figuring out how to use certain items is an essential requirement for making it all the way to the evil Gannon, who has imprisoned the titular princess. Crisp graphics, epic, non-linear gameplay, and a grand musical score make *Zelda* a timeless classic. Followed by: *Zelda II — The Adventure of Link* (NES), *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (SNES, Game Boy Advance), and numerous other sequels.

Legendary Wings

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Vertical Scrolling Shooter/Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

In *Legendary Wings*, players guide a winged soldier over land and sea, shooting, bombing (ground-based targets only), and/or avoiding dragons, stone faces, horseshoe crabs, ninjas, earwigs, and other enemies, some of which move in *Galaga*-like formations. Unfortunately, there is little incentive to kill entire formations since scoring is absent, and since power-ups (twin lasers, penetration shots, flame shots, and firebirds) are obtained by shooting individual enemies. In Capcom's arcade original (1986), destroying every enemy in a formation grants players bonus points or power-ups. In addition, the side-scrolling stages in the coin-op game are largely of the platform shooter variety. For some reason, the NES rendition opts for flight-based horizontal action. As expected, the arcade game has crisper, more colorful graphics. Despite the aforementioned differences and shortcomings, *Legendary Wings* for the NES is a solid, fairly intense shooter that should appeal to fans of such games as *Xevious* and *Dragon Spirit*.

Legends of the Diamond

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Unlike most baseball video games, which feature fictional characters or contemporary Major League stars, *Legends of the Diamond* showcases baseball greats of the past, including such legendary figures as Cy Young, Hank Aaron, Dizzy Dean, Lou Gehrig, Honus Wagner, Ty Cobb, and Babe Ruth (note the conspicuous absence of Mickey Mantle). Players don old-school uniforms, but can play in a modern or a throwback stadium. The limited NES graphics make the players virtually indistinguishable from one another, but it's a neat idea nevertheless. Gameplay evokes *R.B.I. Baseball*, but with wind conditions to make things a little more interesting. Team names are fictional, and gamers can play a solo match or enter an eight-game tournament. Random Mode lets the computer select the players and their positions while Member Select Mode lets gamers determine their own lineup.

Lemmings

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Adventure Puzzle, 1 player. 1992.

Although it lacks a two-player mode and voice effects, *Lemmings* for the NES is a respectable port of the classic computer game. Players guide a cursor around the screen, assigning such tasks as digging, climbing, bridge building, and bashing to mindless lemmings in order to guide them past obstacles (lava, spring-loaded traps, holes, and the like) and to their goal within a set time limit. The game offers 100 levels of play (as opposed to 125 in the SNES version and 180 in the Genesis rendition), and the lemmings flicker a bit when the screen gets crowded. The NES lacks a mouse, meaning computer versions of the game have better controls. Includes password feature. Also released for the Game Boy, 3DO, and numerous other systems.

L'Empereur

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1 player. 1991.

Taking place in the violent aftermath of the French Revolution, *L'Empereur* puts players in the role of Napoleon Bonaparte, who starts off as Officer in Charge of City Affairs and rises in rank to First Consul and then Emperor. With the goal of unifying Europe (46 European cities are included), Napoleon must: recruit and train an army (infantry, cavalry, artillery, and reserves); invade hostile nations (including sea battles); collect taxes; pay stipends; build bridges; survive harsh winters (and other hostile weather conditions); relocate his brothers and son to rule over distant lands; invest in industry and agriculture; fend off strikes, rebellions, and military uprisings; and much more. The turn-based battles take place via a hex map, with terrain consisting of mountains, hills, forests, swamps, grassy plains, sand bars, rivers, lakes, seas, ice, and fortresses. Four game scenarios tell the story of Napoleon's storied life: Napoleon's Beginning, Desire for Power, End of Revolution, and Glorious Empire. Adapted from the 1989 computer game.

Lethal Weapon

PUBLISHER: Ocean. DEVELOPER: Eurocom. Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1993.

Based on the *Lethal Weapon* movie series, this mediocre, surprisingly easy game puts players in the role of Murtaugh (who can pick up boxes) or Riggs (who can jump higher than Murtaugh) as they make their way through a park, a camp, a mall, and other areas, punching, kicking, and shooting soldiers, kick boxers, guards, helicopters, and other commonplace enemies. To toggle between Murtaugh and Riggs, gamers must walk off the left side of the screen, which is strange. Even stranger is that punching and kicking causes more damage than shooting. Also released for the Game Boy and Super NES.

Life Force

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

This *Gradius* spin-off is similar to its progenitor (complete with manual power-up system), but alters the formula by adding vertical scrolling and two-player simultaneous action. Gamers fly their starship through the insides of a galaxy-eating space monster (which is replete with cities and volcanoes), shooting bullets, missiles, and lasers at alien vessels, space rocks, a sphinx, a giant brain, and other enemies (including the terrain itself). Although it suffers from slowdown, *Life Force* is a nice port of Konami's 1986 arcade game. The tough-as-nails gameplay and colorfully detailed graphics will thrill shooter fans.

Linus Spacehead's Cosmic Crusade

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Third-Person Graphic Adventure/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Part point-and-click adventure, part side-scrolling platformer, this is the second game to feature Linus Spacehead (the first being *Linus Spacehead* from the *Quattro Adventure* multi-title cartridge). Using five commands (look, pick up, talk, give, and use), players, as Linus, will interact with the alien environment in a number of ways, including: using a teleport machine; finding the correct keys to enter various

areas; mailing a letter; acquiring a passport; riding a surfboard; and much more. Items to use include an anti-gravity slide, a bridge, gunpowder, a missile targeting device, and more. There are mini-games as well, such as a bumper car race and a slot machine. In the platform stages, the mission is to grab candies to earn extra lives. Released on the Genesis as *Cosmic Spacehead*, which has better, more stylized graphics and a two-player Pie Slap mode. Unlicensed.

Linus Spacehead's Cosmic Crusade (Aladdin Version)

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Third-Person Graphic Adventure/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

The Aladdin rendition of *Linus Spacehead's Cosmic Crusade* looks and plays like the standard version, but was produced in a compact cartridge format. Requires the Aladdin Deck Enhancer. Unlicensed.

Little League Baseball Championship Series

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Developed by the company responsible for the super popular *Baseball Stars* (NES), *Little League Baseball* offers the same type of fun, arcade-style action, but with juvenile players and less emphasis on team management and stats. In addition, the game follows official Little League Baseball rules, such as six-inning games. There are 16 different international teams, each ranked according to pitching, batting, defense, and running. And there are two modes of play: Exhibition and Championship Series. Gameplay is simple and intuitive, and some cool cut scenes add to the game's already top-notch presentation, which includes nice animation and large characters with distinctive traits (chubby, short, lanky, and the like).

The Little Mermaid

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

The Little Mermaid for the NES takes place after Disney's 1989 feature film. The evil octopus/witch Ursula has taken over the ocean,

prompting Ariel to turn back into a mermaid, say goodbye to her beloved Eric, and return to the water to save her friends, Flounder, Sebastian, and Scuttle. Ariel must swim through five levels (Sea of Coral, Sunken Ship, Sea of Ice, Undersea Volcano, and Ursula's Castle), avoiding or throwing bubbles at ghosts, eels, sharks, spineballs, and halibut. In addition, she will search for dinglehoppers (forks), snarfblatts (pipes), hearts (extra health), and shells (for opening treasure chests and knocking out enemies). Opening treasure chests releases pearls that make Ariel faster and stronger, the latter of which enables Ariel to push rocks and barrels for gaining access to certain items. Cute visuals, charming music, fun action, and easy gameplay (despite exploration elements and a non-linear final level) make *The Little Mermaid* ideal for younger gamers.

Little Nemo: the Dream Master

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Based on Windsor McKay's early 1900s comic strip (*Little Nemo in Slumberland*), and on the 1989 feature film (*Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland*), *Little Nemo: the Dream Master* finds the title character on a mission to rescue King Morpheus and restore peace to Slumberland. The surrealistic platforming action takes Nemo (who can run, jump, and duck) through eight colorful, dream-induced levels: Mushroom Forest, Flower Garden, House of Toys, Night Sea, Nemo's House, Cloud Ruins, Topsy-Turvy, and Nightmare World. The objective in each area is to collect all the keys so Nemo can exit to the next level. Nemo will meet numerous animals through his adventure. To tame them, ride them, and gain their powers (fly, dig, throw punches, swim, and more), Nemo can feed them candy, making for a fun and varied adventure.

Little Ninja Brothers

PUBLISHER: Culture Brain. DEVELOPER: Culture Brain. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

The sequel to *Kung-Fu Heroes*, *Little Ninja Brothers* is an oddly humorous cartridge that

separates itself from the average RPG by giving its two playable characters (Jack and Ryu) the ability to punch and kick, making for an action-heavy game. The overhead view, real-time battles are against pigs, ghosts, gargoyles, frogs, bosses, and other enemies. Throughout Chinaland, the world our heroes must explore, there are a number of upgradeable items to grab, including swords, shields, talismans (for slowing down enemies), and throwing stars. Other helpful items include a skateboard, a whirlybird, and a dragster. In addition to the standard game, there's a Field Meeting Mode featuring six different events: 50 Meter Dash, Balloon Popping Race, Athletic Race, Treasure Hunt, Eating Race, and Shooting Race. Includes password feature. Followed by: *Super Ninja Boy* (SNES).

Little Samson

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

In *Little Samson*, players must guide four fearless adventurers through castles, ruins, forests, jungles, mountains, and other nicely illustrated, monster-ridden areas. Each running, jumping, battling character — Little Samson, Kikira the Dragon Lord, Gamm the Rock Lord, and K.O. the Enchanted Beast (The Lord of the Mice) — has his or her own special skills, such as climbing walls, throwing bells, dropping bombs, flying, breathing fire, walking across spikes, walking through small areas, and/or punching. Levels are designed in such a way that players must determine when and where to switch between characters, making for a good, strategic challenge. As in *Mega Man*, there's lots of horizontal scrolling. A relative obscurity, *Little Samson* is a quality game that deserves a larger audience.

Lode Runner

PUBLISHER: Broderbund Software. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Based on Irem's 1984 arcade game (which, itself, was based on the 1983 computer classic), *Lode Runner* for the NES has players guiding a

Galactic Commando up and down ladders, over brick platforms, and across ropes while collecting gold and dodging enemy robots. After collecting all the gold, players should climb a ladder to the top of the screen to exit to the next level. The Galactic Commando is equipped with a laser drill pistol for drilling holes in the brick, which lets players trap enemies or send them falling through the brick floors. Most versions of *Lode Runner* feature 100 or more levels, but the NES rendition contains just 50. Also, players can't save the game boards they have edited. Unlike the original computer game, the NES rendition scrolls to the left and right, meaning it's easy to walk into a trap or get blindsided by an enemy. Despite these weaknesses, smooth controls and classic challenges make the game loads of fun. Followed by: *Hyper Lode Runner* (Game Boy), *Lode Runner* (PlayStation), and *Lode Runner 3-D* (Nintendo 64).

The Lone Ranger

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1991.

A very nice looking and playing take on the classic television series (1949–1957), *The Lone Ranger* puts players in the role of a former Texas Ranger out to avenge his brother's death and rescue the president, who has been kidnapped by the evil Butch Cavendish. The game employs a staggering array of genres and viewpoints, from top-down action to light gun shooter to side-scrolling combat/platform to role-playing adventure. Aided by scouting reports from Tonto, "Kemosabe" must: search buildings, caves, and mountain hideouts; ride his faithful horse, Silver; play poker; make friends with Indians; talk to townsfolk; shoot or punch bad guys to release money, extra bullets, and health hearts; and much more. The masked hero begins the game armed with his fists, a short range pistol, and a supply of bullets, but he can purchase extra bullets, silver bullets, TNT, and medium and long range guns. Compatible with Nintendo's Zapper gun and Konami's LaserScope Voice Command Optical Targeting Headset.

Loopz

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: B.I.T.S.
Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1990.

In *Loopz*, random puzzle pieces appear one at a time over a grid-like board (there are 50 boards in all), and it is up to the player to place them on said board. Each piece is either a straight line or a shape containing perpendicular lines (L-shapes, T-shapes, U-shapes, and the like), and each piece can be rotated. The objective is to connect pieces in order to create loops (enclosed sections), thus making the pieces disappear. Bigger loops net more points, and pieces that are not in the loop (so to speak) stay onscreen. Unlike the similar *Pipe Dream*, pieces cannot overlap, and there are no clues given for the pieces that will appear next. A separate mode of play begins with the computer removing pieces of an already formed loop. Once the pieces have been taken off the board, the player must put them back into place. Also released for the Game Boy.

Low G Man: The Low Gravity Man

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: KID Corp.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Hostile aliens have programmed robots for war against humankind, prompting the Low-G-Man to take action. The high-jumping hero battles through 15 sectors (including mines, the ocean, mountains, a tower, a submarine, and industrial areas), using a freeze gun to halt enemies in their tracks and an armor-piercing spear to kill them. Low-G can also acquire a boomerang, bombs, fireballs, and a wave. Other helpful items include invincibility, double shot, healing potion, and low gravity (for even higher jumps). By killing the drivers of certain vehicles, Low-G can commandeer a robot suit, a hover craft, and a spider, the latter of which can crawl on walls. A game action fans should enjoy, *Low G Man* has huge bosses, detailed backgrounds, and fast music. Includes password feature.

Lunar Pool

PUBLISHER: FCI/Pony Canyon. DEVELOPER: Compile. Sports/Billiards/Futuristic/1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Viewed from overhead, each of the 60 tables in *Lunar Pool* is displayed horizontally. Unlike regular billiards, there are tables of varying layouts, such as an arrow, an L-shape, and a V-shape. In addition, table friction can be altered, determining (at least in part) how far a ball will roll when hit. The objective is simple: set up the electronic cue stick, take aim, select shot power, and shoot the cue ball into various numbered balls in hopes of knocking them into side pockets. Some of the pockets, depending on the table, are obscured by bumpers, adding to the futuristic nature of the game.

Mach Rider

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1985.

Viewed from behind (and a little above) the titular motorcycle, *Mach Rider* has players careening down winding highways in the year 2112, firing a machine gun at enemy vehicles while avoiding rocks, oil spots, oil drums, water, tacks, and bomber balls. The enemies all have the same design (post apocalyptic three-wheelers), but they do come in six different colors and strengths. Using 37 different course parts, players can design (but not save) their own tracks (ala *Excitebike*). Despite spotty collision detection and choppy graphics, the game is fast and fun. A system launch title.

Mad Max

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Gray Matter. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1990.

Mad Max for the NES takes place in a post-apocalyptic, war-torn future. Players, viewing the action from an angled/overhead view perspective, take on the titular role, a leather-clad nomad driving around wastelands, dodging oil slicks, barricades, gangs, and pits while lobbing dynamite and shooting bullets at various enemies and obstacles. The overall objective in the roadway segments is to reach the demolition arena, where cars knock each other into pits. Such helpful items as ammo, fuel, and dynamite can be found in mine shafts or purchased in service stations. Based on the films *The Road Warrior* (1981) and *Beyond Thun-*

derdome (1985), both of which were sequels to 1979's *Mad Max* (starring Mel Gibson).

The Mafat Conspiracy

PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai. DEVELOPER: Vic Tokai.
Multi-Genre Game/Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

The sequel to *Golgo 13*, *The Mafat Conspiracy* once again puts players in the role of Duke Togo (a.k.a. Golgo 13), a sharp-shooting secret agent. Duke has been assigned by the CIA to eliminate the leader of the Mafat Revolutionary Group, which is threatening to bring down all American and Soviet satellites. The action is divided into five different types of gameplay scenarios: side-scrolling (shoot and kick scorpions, dogs, and armed men); stationary (punch and kick enemies); sniper (aim and fire, taking wind speed and direction into account); Ferrari (drive, shift gears, throw grenades at other cars); and first-person maze (walk down hallways, shoot bad guys, use infrared scope to see). The maze sequences are redundant in terms of gameplay and visuals (the walls are a consistent gray), but the rest of the game is nicely illustrated and more fully realized. As in *Golgo 13*, cinematic cut scenes tell the involved storyline.

Magic Darts

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Romstar.
Sports/Darts, 1-4 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Boasting 10 playable characters (including a monkey, an alien, a ninja, and a robot) and three different dart weights, *Magic Darts* lets gamers compete in six different versions of the popular bar room sport: 301, 501, 701, Count Up, Round the Clock, and Half It. The bottom 1/4 of the screen shows the player, who is positioned on the right, throwing darts at a side-view board, which is positioned on the left. The top 3/4 of the screen depicts a large, traditional, black and red dart board, viewed from the front. To set the position, curve, angle, and power of a dart throw, golf-like meters are used. *Magic Darts* joins the computer title *180* (circa 1986) as one of very few video or computer games based on darts.

Magic Johnson's Fast Break

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Sports/Basketball, 1, 2, or 4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

The first basketball cartridge compatible with the NES Satellite, *Magic Johnson's Fast Break* lets one, two, or four armchair athletes engage in a simple, yet fast and fairly enjoyable game of two-on-two action (seen from an elevated side-view perspective). There's no tournament or season mode, but gamers can select from five different difficulty levels. Other elements include three-minute quarters, an animated crowd, fouls, free throws, dunks (but no *Double Dribble*-like cut scenes), steals, stats, salaries, and a 24-second clock. After players make a three-pointer (a fairly easy thing to do), a close-up of Magic Johnson will appear. Unfortunately, the NBA legend is not a playable character. Based on Arcadia's 1988 arcade game.

The Magic of Scheherazade

PUBLISHER: Culture Brain. DEVELOPER: Culture Brain. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

The Magic of Scheherazade is an unusual (not to mention high quality) RPG, offering turn-based fights (strategically select two characters to engage in battle) as well as *Zelda*-style action (battle enemies to gain experience and cash). There are three character classes—Saint, Fighter, and Magician, each of varying abilities and weaponry—and five Arabian worlds to conquer: Water, Desert, Winter, Flower, and a mystery level, the latter of which finds players battling the evil wizard Sabaron, who summoned demons to Arabia in the first place. As in most RPGs, visiting shops and casting spells (killer winds, thunder, fire, and star attacks, turning enemies into fireworks, etc.) play prominent roles, as does using such items as swords, magic rods, and magic carpet. Players can even go to casinos and attend Magic University. Includes password feature.

Magician

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: Eurocom.
Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

In *Magician*, players, as a wizard named Paul, must journey through the kingdom of Merlwood (which consists of towns, wilderness, lakes, forests, caverns, dungeons, castles, and towers), engaging in real-time battles with creatures (rats, skeletons, dragons, and the like) beset upon the land by Abaddon, an evil magician. The action scrolls vertically, horizontally, and diagonally, and Paul can run, jump (over gaps and onto moving platforms), and even fly. As with most RPGs, there are plenty of puzzles to solve, including overhead view areas where Paul must use holes to make stones shift. Other activities include talking to townsfolk to garner clues, casting spells, and finding or purchasing keys, shields, staffs, lightning, food, and other items. A fairly obscure title, *Magician* is easily one of the most complex games in the NES library. Includes battery backup.

MagMax

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Despite missing certain graphical flourishes (the robot enemies near the beginning of the game don't bob up and down, for example) and the inclusion of a reworked soundtrack, *MagMax* for the NES is a solid port of Nichibutsu's enjoyable (if unspectacular) arcade game (1985). The action begins on the surface of a planet, with gamers guiding a small, tank-like robot body part over simple brown pathways and solid green grass, shooting at more than 30 different types of mechanical enemies and dodging their fire. As play progresses, MagMax (who began as the aforementioned body part) can add to his form, ultimately becoming a full-sized robot. He can also maneuver underground, where he will fly. Areas to battle through include: Forest, Desert, Sea, and Automated City. The transformative nature of the titular robot sets the game apart, at least to some degree, from the plethora of NES shooters.

Major League Baseball

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Enteractive. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

The first NES game backed by the big leagues, *Major League Baseball* includes all 26 teams from the 1987 season. The game lacks an MLPBA license, but real players are represented by their jersey number, abilities, throwing arm, and batting order placement. All the staples of the genre are included, such as pitching, catching, hitting, bunting, pitch outs, base stealing, fielding, and errors, and players can make such managerial moves as bringing in relief pitchers, changing the batting lineup, and using pinch hitters. Modes of play include Regular Game, All Star Game, and World Series.

Maniac Mansion

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: LucasArts. Third-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

Sporting a side-view perspective, *Maniac Mansion* has players guiding three (of seven) teenagers of varying abilities through a large haunted house in order to rescue a girl. This requires using an arrow cursor to select verbs (get, open, close, use, push, pull, turn on, turn off, and the like) that appear in a list on the lower portion of the screen, and then applying said verbs to various household objects within the mansion. Puzzle-laden activities include fixing a phone and a shortwave radio, draining a swimming pool, opening mail, escaping from a dungeon, and much more. Certain elements found in the 1987 computer classic are missing, such as a nude statue and suggestive text, but the game remains an engrossing and challenging adventure. Includes battery backup.

Mappy-Land

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: Namco. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

The console exclusive sequel to Namco's *Mappy* (arcade, 1983), *Mappy-Land* has similar gameplay (run across platforms, bounce on trampolines, grab items, avoid enemies), but expands upon the concept with climbable ladders and vines, an actual jump button, and eight themed levels: Railroad Town, Western World, Tropical World, Jungle World, Pirates World, Ghost Town, Seventh Avenue, and Mucky Town. The game also adds a variety of

relatively ineffectual (and oftentimes indirect) weaponry, including fish, bowling balls, punching bags, and fireworks. Visually, *Mappy-Land* falls flat, but *Mappy* fans should enjoy the game's distinctively bouncy challenges.

Marble Madness

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare. Maze, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Like the Genesis port, *Marble Madness* for the NES offers two controller options (horizontal and diagonal), compensating, at least in part, for the lack of trackball control. One or two players race a marble through six short, timed, Escher-esque mazes, using gentle, precise, balanced touches of the control pad to keep the ball from falling into a chasm or off the side of the pathway. Marble munchers, steelies, vacuums, acid slime, and other obstacles impede the marble's progress, but players can get bonus points for finding short cuts and battling certain enemies. The pseudo-3D look of Atari's 1984 coin-op classic remains largely intact. Also released for the Game Boy, Game Boy Color, Game Boy Advance (via *Marble Madness/Klax*), and Game Gear. Followed by: *Marble Madness 2: Marble Man* (arcade, 1992).

Mario Bros.

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

An excellent port of Nintendo's 1983 arcade classic (which featured the debut of Mario's brother, Luigi), *Mario Bros.* is a much different game than the more elaborate, more famous *Super Mario Bros.* Players guide the titular Italian plumber as he runs across water pipe platforms and jumps under those platforms in order to knock over turtles, crabs, fighter flies, and freezies. Once knocked over, the creatures can be kicked off the screen. There are also coins to grab, fireballs to

dodge, and a POW button for knocking over all the creatures at once. Although simplistic in design, *Mario Bros.* is a blast to play, especially with a second gamer joining in as Luigi. Players can team up or, for huge laughs and a better time, compete against one another. Also released for the Atari 2600 and Atari 7800. Followed by: *Super Mario Bros. 2* (NES), *Super Mario World* (SNES), and other sequels and offshoots.

Mario Is Missing!

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Radical Entertainment. Educational/Geography/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

A lesser entry in the Mario franchise, *Mario is Missing!* puts players in the role of Luigi, who must rescue his brother from Bowser and his Koopa buddies. This is done by exploring 14 cities, jumping on Koopas to retrieve stolen items, and answering questions pertaining to Tokyo, London, Cairo, and other locales. Trivia examples include: "How tall is the Empire State Building?" and "Where is the Sistine Chapel located?" To help Luigi, he can use such tools as a computer, a map, a globe



Though the coin-op classics *Mappy*, *Dig Dug*, and *Centipede* weren't released for the NES, their sequels, *Mappy-Land*, *Dig Dug II*, and *Millipede*, did appear on the 8-bit console. *The Mafat Conspiracy* is the sequel to *Golgo 13*.

(for riding Yoshi), and a question mark (for asking people questions). The educational value is marginal, and the action is limited in nature (Yoshi can't use his tongue, for example). The Super NES version of *Mario is Missing!*, which includes 15 cities, is more colorful and has richer graphics.

Mario's Time Machine

PUBLISHER: The Software Toolworks. DEVELOPER: Radical Entertainment. Educational/History/Non-Scrolling Platform/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1994.

In this sequel to *Mario is Missing!*, Bowser has stolen historical artifacts and placed them in his museum. Each of the seven rooms in the museum is a drastically simplified rendition of the non-scrolling platform game *Mario Bros.* In each room, Mario must knock over three Koopa Troops (by head-bopping them from below) and kick them off the screen. This produces an artifact, which must be taken via time machine to the correct place within the correct time period (there are 14 periods in all, ranging from prehistoric times up to 1989). Each period is a short, side-scrolling level containing 1-

blocks that release historical facts (which should be read and memorized) when bopped. Though nothing special, the NES version of the game, which includes a Yoshi-gets-kidnapped subplot, is actually preferable to the Super NES rendition, which is plagued by dull sequences in which Mario must surf across the ocean and collect mushrooms.

Master Chu and the Drunkard Hu

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Joy Van. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

In the oddly titled *Master Chu and the Drunkard Hu*, the legendary Siamese-Twin Shiva (a.k.a. the God of destruction) has cursed the village with evil spirits, meaning numerous enemies abound in the palaces and temples, including serpents, tarantulas, jaws of steel, great balls of fire, vampire bats, fire demons, and flowers of destruction. Chu and Hu, the latter of whom becoming a drunk after repeated failures to drive out Shiva's evil forces, must thwart this onslaught by running, jumping, and shooting (fireballs) their way through

10 hostile worlds. Collecting various items (symbols of harmony, scrolls, amulets, keys, and the like) lets players battle bosses, become temporarily invulnerable, double or triple their firepower, unlock secret passages, and more. The baby blue cartridge screams Color Dreams, as does the poorly programmed game, which is plagued by shoddy collision detection, cheap looking graphics, and repetitious music. Unlicensed.

Maxi 15

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Various. Multi-Game Compilation, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Maxi 15 contains 13 previously released games: *Chiller*, *Deathbots*, *Double Strike*, *Dudes with Attitude*, *F-15 City War*, *Krazy Kreatures*, *Menace Beach*, *Puzzle*,



Two of the best, most accurate arcade ports in the NES library: *Mario Bros.* and *Donkey Kong 3*.

Pyramid, *Shock Wave*, *Solitaire*, *Tiles of Fate*, and *Venice Beach Volleyball*. In addition, the cartridge contains two previously unreleased games: *Rad Racket — Deluxe Tennis II* and *Stakk'm*. The tennis game features six playable characters, three court surfaces (hard, grass, and clay), singles and doubles action, and a traditional elevated viewpoint from behind the court. *Stakk'm* is a *Tetris*-inspired game in which numbered blocks fall one at a time from the top of the screen, with players making them disappear by placing them in vertical, horizontal, and diagonal rows. For a row to disappear, it must consist of similar or consecutive numbers. Treasure blocks, which act as wild cards, can be helpful while death blocks simply get in the way. Unlicensed.

M.C. Kids

PUBLISHER: Virgin Interactive. DEVELOPER: Virgin Interactive. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

M.C. Kids is a surprisingly fun, surprisingly challenging game that is much more than a commercial for the McDonalds restaurant chain. Mick and Mack must make their way through McDonaldland, picking up and throwing blocks at rabbits, beavers, birds, and other creatures, making sure to collect a specific number of cards (some of which are hard to find) in each stage. Gathering 100 golden arches initiates a bonus game, and there are a variety of activities throughout, including crossing icy bridges, bouncing on springboards, throwing snow at enemies, riding a boat, floating on clouds, and more. *Super Mario Bros.* fans should enjoy the game, though Mick and Mack (who also starred in *Mick & Mack as the Global Gladiators* for the Genesis) cannot jump on enemies.

Mechanized Attack

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Based on SNK's 1988 arcade game, which boasted a pair of replica machine guns and two-player simultaneous action, *Mechanized Attack* has gamers, armed with an assault gun, a rocket launcher, and grenades, guiding a cur-

sor around the screen (or aiming with the Nintendo Zapper), shooting at robots, rebel soldiers, helicopters, frogmen, gunboats, destroyers, attack dogs, and other enemies. There are no innocents, meaning players should feel free to fire away at anything that moves. The action scrolls automatically left and right through a variety of areas, including forests, airfields, seas, caves, and a train. Shooting boxes replenishes ammo and health. When it gets dark, shooting flares lights up the night. Similar to: *Operation Wolf* (arcade, NES).

Mega Man

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

The first game in a popular series that would spawn five NES sequels, plus games for the SNES, PlayStation, and other systems, *Mega Man* puts players in the title role of a small, humanoid robot (created by Dr. Wright) clad in a round helmet and blue costume. Mega Man's job is to run, jump, shoot (left and right only), and climb his way through six obstacle-filled levels, each ending in a robot-gone-bad boss: Cutman, Gutsman, Iceman, Bombman, Fireman, or Elecman. After defeating a boss, Mega Man will acquire that character's weaponry, such as fireballs or boomerangs. After beating the first six levels, Mega Man must enter the last stage to face Dr. Wily, who is responsible for reprogramming the aforementioned robots to become evil. The game scrolls vertically as well as horizontally, and *Mega Man* poses a formidable challenge (thanks in part to disappearing platforms and tough-to-dodge projectiles), but the health meter is long, and continues are unlimited. Selectable levels and weapons, sharp (if somewhat simplistic) visuals, and compelling gameplay make *Mega Man* an all-time classic.

Mega Man 2

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Arguably the best game in the series, *Mega Man 2* improves upon the already winning formula established by the original game. Improvements include: crisper controls; superior

sounds; Genesis-quality graphics; two difficulty levels; a password feature for saving progress; a nifty introductory sequence; larger, more detailed enemies (with such names as Atomic Chicken, Robo-Rabbit, and Lantern Fish); and larger, more imaginative level designs. There are eight bosses (as opposed to six in the original *Mega Man*), each created by (instead of just reprogrammed by) Dr. Wily: HeatMan, AirMan, WoodMan, BubbleMan, QuickMan, FishMan, MetalMan, and CrashMan. Once again, by defeating a boss, players will gain a new weapon, such as the ability to freeze enemies or throw tornadoes, metal blades, or bubbles. In addition, Dr. Light (formerly Dr. Wright) is on hand to provide three transportation items: a levitation platform, a jet sled, and an elevator. Scoring has been removed, but this is no great loss.

Mega Man 3

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Sticking closely to the format of *Mega Man 2* (which, in terms of basic gameplay, was very similar to the original *Mega Man*), *Mega Man 3* features eight new bosses (Magnet Man, Snake Man, Needle Man, Hard Man, Top Man, Gemini Man, Spark Man, and Shadow Man), each thematically fitting of the level they are in. As in the first *Mega Man*, battling the robots in the correct order (stages are selectable) is important for acquiring the weapons (lasers, needles, magnet missiles, and the like) needed for the next battle. New to the series is Mega Man's helpful dog, Rush, who, when his weapons box appears, can be turned into one of the following machines: a springboard for high jumps, a submarine to keep Mega Man alive underwater, or a jet for flying. In addition, Mega Man can now pull off a sliding maneuver.

Mega Man 4

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Though it features a new villain (Dr. Cos-sack) and an introductory origin sequence, *Mega Man 4* plays a whole lot like the first three games in the series. As in *Mega Man 2* and *Mega*

Man 3, there are eight new robot masters to battle: Pharoah Man, Toad Man, Bright Man, Dive Man, Ring Man, Drill Man, Dust Man, and Skull Man, each of whom, when defeated, releases a selectable weapon for Mega Man to take, such as a rain flush, a dust crusher, a skull barrier, or a dive torpedo. Rush returns from *Mega Man 3*, offering Mega Man the same helpful tools: a springboard, a submarine, and a jet. New to the series is Flip-Top, Dr. Light's cybernetic assistant who appears from time to time offering power-ups. Also new is a mega buster weapon (which is basically the standard weapon charged up), a balloon adaptor (for creating small floating platforms), and a wire adaptor (for pulling up on a wire to ledges and ceilings).

Mega Man 5

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

By the time *Mega Man 5* was released, most NES aficionados were firmly entrenched in the *Mega Man* formula: run; jump (on platforms, some moving, some disappearing); slide; climb up and down ladders; shoot (left and right) enemy robots; dodge obstacles (lasers, fire, enemy projectiles, and the like); and grab tanks to replenish energy. Bosses in *MM5* include: Charge Man, Napalm Man, Gyro Man, Stone Man, Crystal Man, Wave Man, Star Man, and Gravity Man, each with a different selectable weapon to take and use. Flip-Top and Rush make return engagements, but this time Rush can only turn into a springboard and a jet. The mega buster weapon returns from *Mega Man 4*, but it can now be used to blast through walls to find hidden power-ups and secret passages. In addition, Mega Man can ride a super arrow to scale high walls, and he can search for letters spelling out MEGA-MAN V to unlock a powerful new ally: an attack robot bird named Beat.

Mega Man 6

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1994.

Although published by Nintendo, *Mega Man 6* sticks to the tried and true formula of the

previous games in the series. In a new storyline, the mysterious (if familiar looking) Mr. X employs a robot fighting tournament to unleash upon the world eight killer robots: Blizzard Man, Wind Man, Knight Man, Plant Man, Centaur Man, Flame Man, Tomahawk Man, and Yamato Man, each of whom Mega Man must defeat in order to beat the level and gain a new weapon. As usual, each boss fits the theme of his level, such as Blizzard Man's frozen terrain and Plant Man's jungle surroundings. In addition, there are now mini-bosses. Rush is back, but this time he can transform into a jet pack for launching Mega Man into the sky and body armor for enabling Mega Man to punch through walls. Beat is back as well (unlockable by finding the letters BEAT), and so is Flip-Top. Followed by numerous sequels and offshoots, including *Mega Man X* (SNES), *Mega Man 8* (PlayStation, Saturn), and *Mega Man 9* (PlayStation 3, Wii, Xbox 360).

Menace Beach

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Menace Beach finds a cool dude named Scooter riding a skateboard from left to right, jumping over obstacles and battling such enemies as ninjas, Elvis impersonators, and evil clowns. Bad guys throw bottles and bombs from windows and manholes, but these items can be picked up and used as weapons. Scooter can also punch, do spin kicks, grab balloons (for floating), and get boosts from Squirt the fire hydrant and a frog named Froggy. Scooter's job is to rescue his chained up girlfriend, whose clothes rot off as the game progresses (creating some controversy at the time). In 1995, Wisdom Tree retrofitted the game with a religious theme and released it as *Sunday Funday*.

Mendel Palace

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Game Freak. Overhead View Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

With its non-scrolling screens, pastel colors, and simple, yet addictively challenging gameplay, *Mendel Palace* offers a distinctly old-

school experience. Players walk around a 5x7 grid of tiles, shuffling the tiles in order to shove enemies into walls (the storyline revolves around a girl who is being held captive by her dolls in the titular palace). Shuffling tiles also reveals treasures and power-ups, such as suns that shuffle all the tiles on the board or time panels that put extra time on the clock. Many tiles contain stars, and grabbing 100 stars grants players an extra life. There are eight types of enemies (swimmers, dancers, girl scouts, and the like), each of which behaves in a different way, such as spinning, sliding, or jumping. Developed by Game Freak, a key company in the origination of Nintendo's Pokémon franchise. *Pengo* fans may want to check this one out.

Mermaids of Atlantis

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: American Video Entertainment/Panesian. Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1991.

Mermaids of Atlantis is a sanitized version of Panesian's *Bubble Bath Babes*. The naked woman at the bottom of the playfield has been change to a mermaid, the between-level nudie screens are now storyline cut scenes, and the difficulty level has been turned down a notch or two, making for a more accessible game. Unlicensed.

Metal Fighter

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Joy Van. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Despite the fact that players pilot a bulky fighter ship that looks like a baby chick with a giant head, *Metal Fighter* is a decent side-scroller that is more playable than most Color Dreams games. The titular ship walks and jumps along the ground, shooting at an odd assortment of colorful bionic mutants, which frequently make the screen very crowded. By grabbing an "F" power-up, the ship can fly, which is unusual since in most side-scrolling shooters the ship can fly from the get-go. Other power-ups offer speed, extra plasma balls, double lasers, multi-angle fire, and circular fire. Unlike most shooters with forced scrolling, *Metal Fighter* lets players turn back and shoot to the left. Unlicensed.

Metal Gear

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Stealth, 1 player. 1988.

The forerunner of *Metal Gear Solid* (PSX), *Metal Gear* puts players in the role of Solid Snake, a stealthy marine who must infiltrate five heavily fortified, overhead-view strongholds located throughout Outer Haven, which is a South African nation ruled by ruthless dictator Colonel Vermon CaTaffy. Snake can acquire guns, a rocket launcher, plastic explosives, and other weapons, but hiding and sneaking past guards and soldiers is his primary strategy. Certain areas require numbered key cards to enter. Other helpful items in this complex, though popular game include body armor, binoculars, a transceiver, a mine detector, a flashlight, a compass, rations, an oxygen tank, and more. Followed by: *Snake's Revenge* (NES), *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance* (PS2, Xbox), and other sequels.

Metal Mech

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

In *Metal Mech*, the intrepid Tony Martin must single-handedly thwart an alien invasion. The invaders in question are mechanical in nature and include such creatures and vehicles as skull tanks, dragonflies, dogs, ninjas, blowfish, blobs, hovercrafts, and top-walkers, the latter of which hang upside down and walk on the ceiling. Tony pilots a slow-moving Metal Mech, which can stomp on or shoot enemies, but sometimes he must exit the alien vehicle to navigate tight spaces. Tony blasts his way through six levels: City, Towers, Sewers, Atlantis, Alien City, and Alien Queen's Mothership (where Tony dons a jetpack and wields a sonic boomer). Each level has things to discover and collect, including smart bombs, extra lives, shields, a spacesuit, fuel, a cannon, and keys (for exiting the levels). Similar to (but not as good as): *Blaster Master*.

MetalStorm

PUBLISHER: Irem. DEVELOPER: Irem. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

In the year 2501, a defense mechanism stationed on Pluto has malfunctioned and is systematically destroying all the planets in the Solar System. To reach the rogue weapon's self-destruct device, players, at the helm of an M-308 Gunner battlemech, must walk, jump, and shoot their way through four stages of tanks, surveillance robots, defense gates, laser beams, and other enemies and obstacles. Armor, extra time, shields, power beams (which increase the width of the player's laser), and other items to pick up make this challenging task manageable. One unusual aspect of the M-308 Gunner is that it allows players to strategically reverse gravity, sending the mech upward to walk on the ceiling. Other notables include multi-layered backgrounds, nice animation, fun gameplay, a peppy soundtrack, and a garish color scheme consisting of various shades of purple, peach, orange, yellow, red, green, and blue. Includes password feature.

Metroid

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Platform Shooter/Adventure, 1 player. 1987.

Metroid is a tough, non-linear game in which a space suit-wearing cyborg named Samus Aran must explore the dark, yet beautiful caverns of an alien planet, using beams (short, long, ice, and wave), bombs (which can uncover hidden areas), missiles, and a screw attack to battle a variety of creepy creatures, including mini-bosses and the vaunted Mother Brain. To access narrow passageways, Samus can roll up into a ball. The action scrolls vertically and horizontally, and it's easy to get turned around in the vast, interconnected world (backtracking is inevitable). *Metroid* spawned numerous sequels, including *Metroid II* for the Game Boy and *Super Metroid* for the SNES, and has a famous surprise ending—SPOILER ALERT!—in which Samus is revealed to be a woman. Along with *Kid Icarus*, *Metroid* was the first video game cartridge to include a password feature for saving progress.

Michael Andretti's World GP

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: American Sammy. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Viewed from behind the vehicle, *Michael Andretti's World GP* lets players select from four different four-speed cars (Chevy Lola, Honda V10, Ferrari V12, or Mugen V8) for racing on 16 twisting, turning, international tracks, each of which is visually sparse. Andretti himself is on hand to offer advice (which is actually useful) prior to each race, and gamers can select from three modes of play: Practice, Two Player (split screen), and Grand Prix (which is really long). Turning is done incrementally, meaning the control pad must be pressed several times for each turn. Tires will wear out, making pit stops necessary, but fuel is not a factor. Similar to: *Michael Andretti's Indy Car Challenge* (SNES). Includes password feature.

Mickey Mousecapade

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

The first Disney-related game for the NES, *Mickey Mousecapade* has players guiding Mickey Mouse through five levels of play (Fun House, Ocean, Woods, Pirate Ship, and Castle), with Minnie tagging along, echoing Mickey's moves. Both characters run, jump, climb, and shoot stars at enemies, but Minnie, who cannot be left behind, must occasionally be rescued (by finding a hidden key) after being kidnapped by the Crow, making her something of a nuisance. Peg Leg Pete, Crocodile, and The Wizard are also on hand to make Mickey's task a challenge. Although playable, *Mickey Mousecapade* would be a much better game if it had a two-player simultaneous mode.

Mickey's Adventure in Numberland

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Educational/Math/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Big Bad Pete has stolen Numberland's magical number molds, prompting Sheriff Donald Duck to employ Mickey Mouse to retrieve them. As Mickey, players must run, jump, avoid obstacles (including falling crates, trap doors, bouncing flour sacks, and ringing telephones), enter doors, ride conveyor belts, and collect the correct numbers through five

side-scrolling levels: City, Number Factory, Space Research Center, Number City Museum, and Big Bad Pete's Hideout. At the end of each level is a bonus round in which players must solve a simple math problem. Mickey is nicely animated and speaks the numbers and a variety of phrases in his patented, high-pitched voice. The follow-up to *Mickey's Safari in Letterland*, *Mickey's Adventure in Numberland* is designed to teach younger gamers number recognition (1–10), counting, and rudimentary addition.

Mickey's Safari in Letterland

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Educational/Reading/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

In *Mickey's Safari in Letterland*, Mickey Mouse must run, jump, and grab letters (with a butterfly net) through six levels of play: Yukon, Swamp, Forest, Pyramids, Jungle, and Caribbean. The objective in each stage is to retrieve three letters, spelling a word in the process. There are enemies to dodge, such as a seal, a turtle, and a hippo (like the one in *Fantasia*), but Mickey never loses a life. As in *Mickey's Adventure in Numberland*, there are three difficulty levels, all of them very easy. Mickey speaks letters and phrases clearly, and Mickey's pal Goofy is on hand to drive Mickey to each level. Cartoon-like graphics add to the fun. Followed by: *Mickey's Adventure in Numberland*.

Micro Machines

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Miniature/Radio Control Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Viewed from an overhead perspective, *Micro Machines* is a nicely detailed, wildly inventive game that lets players select from nine miniaturized vehicles (including sports cars, a helicopter, a power boat, and a combat tank) and nine different racing environments (including a kitchen, a pool table, a sand pit, and a bathtub). There are 32 tracks in all. One-player races are against three computer-controlled cars, and there are 11 characters to com-

pete against, each with his or her own skill level. The controls are simple, the racing action is fun and variety-filled, and the game makes creative use of rubber ducks, Cheerios, sand castles, and other commonplace items. Includes Tournament mode. Based on the line of Galoob toys. Also released for the Game Boy, Game Gear, SNES, and Genesis. Followed by numerous sequels, including *Micro Machines 64 Turbo* (Nintendo 64) and *Micro Machines 1 and 2: Twin Turbo* (Game Boy Color). Unlicensed.

Micro Machines (Aladdin Version)

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Miniature/Radio Control Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

The Aladdin rendition of *Micro Machines* looks and plays like the standard version, but was produced in a compact cartridge format. Requires the Aladdin Deck Enhancer. Unlicensed.

Mig 29 Soviet Fighter

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Third-Person Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

One of the better unlicensed NES games, *Mig 29 Soviet Fighter* does a good job alternating between two distinct types of airborne shooting: behind-the-plane/third-person and overhead view/vertical scrolling. The Mig players control begins with one weapon, but completing missions adds double missiles, spiral missiles, cluster spread (triple firing), and optimum (a combination of the other three weapons). Enemies to avoid or blow out of the sky include bombers, fighter planes, guided missiles, and more. There are ground-based targets as well, such as tanks, artillery shells, and rocket launchers. Refueling and landing sequences add to the challenge. The action takes place over forests, oceans, deserts, arctic landscapes, and a chemical factory. In two-player “Share” mode, gamers pick up where the other player left off (which is different than most alternating games, in which players each have their own separate level progression).

Might & Magic: Secret of the Inner Sanctum

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: G-Amusements. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1992.

Secret of the Inner Sanctum lets players pick a party of six adventurers (fighters, clerics, robbers, wizards, paladins, and archers) for use in exploring the enchanted Land of Varn, which is a vast, non-linear world of caverns, castles, forests, and islands. To aid players in their search for the Inner Sanctum, which involves plenty of monster battling, there are more than 250 weapons and other items, plus 92 mystical spells. The bottom half of the screen displays the many text-based commands while the top half shows the creatures (which are non-animated) and first-person rooms, hallways, and other areas. In comparison to the original 1986 Apple II computer game (*Might and Magic: Book One*) the NES version is easier, but has better graphics and sound. Includes battery backup. Followed by numerous sequels, including *Might and Magic III: Isles of Terra* (Genesis, SNES) and *Heroes of Might and Magic* (Game Boy Color).

Mighty Bomb Jack

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1987.

Mighty Bomb Jack for the NES is a port of Tecmo’s 1986 coin-op classic, which was the sequel to Tehkan’s *Bomb Jack* (arcade, 1984). *Mighty Bomb Jack* is similar to *Bomb Jack*, but with side-scrolling action and “mighty powers” added to the already fun formula. Players guide Jack as he runs and jumps (extremely high when necessary) on platforms, collecting bombs and treasures (extra time, hidden doorways, gold coins, and the like) while avoiding zombies, birds, skulls, and other enemies. Grabbing mighty coins (for mighty powers) lets Jack open special treasure chests and briefly transform enemies into collectable gold coins. In addition to the labyrinthine side-scrolling areas, players will frequently enter royal palace rooms, which evoke the non-scrolling stages of *Bomb Jack*. Also, if Jack collects too many mighty coins, he will be sent to the aptly named

torture room, in which he must jump around avoiding enemies for a set amount of time. This latter feature is a little annoying, and some gamers will wish Jack could shoot or jump on enemies, but *Mighty Bomb Jack* is a challenging good time nevertheless. Followed by: *Bomb Jack Twin* (arcade, 1993).

Mighty Final Fight

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1993.

Released late in the life of the NES, *Mighty Final Fight* is a cartoonish take on the 1989 arcade game, *Final Fight*. Players guide small, super deformed versions of Cody, Guy (who was missing from *Final Fight* for the Super NES), or Mike Haggar through five levels of slums, factories, and city streets, using drop kicks, knee bashes, head butts, super kicks, throws, shurikens, knives, and other moves and weapons to fight bad guys (including bosses Thrasher and Katana). There is no two-player mode, but the game does add an experience points system that gives it some degree of depth (at least for a brawler). Flickering is abundant, and the game is short and somewhat repetitive, but *Mighty Final Fight* makes for an interesting addition to the popular franchise (which includes such games as *Final Fight 2* and *Final Fight 3* for the SNES and *Final Fight CD* for the Sega CD).

Mike Tyson's Punch-Out !!

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Sports/Boxing, 1 player. 1987.

This super fun game is based on Nintendo's *Punch-Out!!* (arcade, 1984), but adds a final match against controversial boxing legend Mike Tyson. The perspective is from behind the player's pugilist, but he is short, giving gamers a good view of the action. (In the arcade original, the player's boxer is a translucent green). Boxers can block, duck, dodge, throw uppercuts, and punch left and right to the face and body. There are 10 different opponents of varying fighting styles, and it takes strategy and technique to beat each one of them (as opposed to simple button-mashing). Re-released in 1992 (sans Mike Tyson) as *Punch-Out!!*. Followed by: *Super Punch-Out!!* (SNES).

Millipede

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

The coin-op classic *Centipede* didn't make it to the NES, but its less-well-known (though still popular) sequel, *Millipede*, did. When compared to the arcade original (Atari, 1982), *Millipede* for the NES adds title music to the formula (ala *Joust* for the NES), but takes away something even the Atari 2600 port managed to get right: the ability to start the game at the 15,000 or 30,000 point level. In addition, the visuals aren't as sharp (despite retaining the rippling screen effect), and firing arrows sounds annoyingly scratchy. Gameplay remains largely (and enjoyably) intact, with gamers guiding a firing mechanism around the bottom 1/4 or so of the screen, shooting upward at segments of a giant millipede as it works its way, snake-like, down an enchanted mushroom forest. Other bugs to shoot include spiders, mosquitoes, dragonflies, mayflies, caterpillars, ladybugs, and "longicorns." Destroying mushrooms alters the millipede's pathway, and shooting any of several DDT bombs stationed about the forest wipes out nearby enemies. Also released for the Game Boy Advance (via *Millipede/Super Breakout/Lunar Lander*).

Milon's Secret Castle

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

At first glance, *Milon's Secret Castle* appears to be a *Super Mario Bros.* wannabe, but with mediocre graphics and a Little Nemo-like protagonist who shoots bubbles instead of jumps on enemies (bubbles are shot at a downward or upward angle, but not straight ahead). However, *Secret Castle* is more difficult (and more frustrating) than *Super Mario Bros.*, thanks to re-spawning enemies, tough bosses, and hidden items that must be found in order to complete the quest. Finding hidden items requires lots of random shooting at bricks that all look alike, which is a tactic that now seems hopelessly dated. Items to search for include: keys (for opening doors); protective shield

bees; energy-rich honeycombs; coins (for purchasing items in shops); umbrellas (for rapid fire bubbles); and music boxes (for advancing to bonus stages). When the running, jumping Milon gets hit by an enemy, he does *not* become invincible for a few seconds, adding to the difficulty. Thankfully, there is a continue feature, which is achieved (only after the collection of the first crystal ball) by holding down the left arrow on the control pad while pushing start. Also released for the Game Boy.

The Miracle Piano Teaching System

PUBLISHER: The Software Toolworks. DEVELOPER: The Software Toolworks. Musical Instrument/Band Simulator, 1 player. 1990.

Packed-in with a full-sized electronic piano keyboard, which is enhanced with two speakers for stereo sound, *Miracle Piano Teaching System* teaches gamers how to play the titular instrument. As players pound away at the pressure sensitive keys, onscreen keys flash to mimic the movements of the real keys. A variety of drills, musical numbers, and games (such as shooting ducks and making robots jump) enable players to practice music notation, fingering techniques, pedaling, and more. In addition, the keyboard is equipped with more than 100 virtual musical instruments and other sounds, including guitars, drums, and voice effects.

Mission Cobra

PUBLISHER: Bunch Games. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

In *Mission Cobra*, players pilot a helicopter over land and sea while shooting choppers, sonic jets, flying saucers, and other enemies, some of which drop power-ups when destroyed. Said power-ups include double missiles, triple missiles, and angled triple missiles, as well as circular fire, invincibility, and energy, the latter of which is extremely important since mere flying drains energy at a steady pace. At the end of each level, players must battle a mother ship boss, such as a chopper carrier, an eagle destroyer, or a double-winged fighter. The standard enemies move in boring, unimaginative

patterns (mostly in straight lines), but there are enough of them to put up a challenge. The backgrounds are flat and lacking in detail, and the constant noise of the helicopter blades gets annoying in a hurry. Unlicensed.

Mission: Impossible

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Overhead View Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

Based on the late 1980s TV show (as opposed to the original series, which aired from 1966 to 1973), *Mission: Impossible* for the NES lets players control three IMF agents, each of whom is outfitted with different weapons and skills, such as guns, bombs, boomerangs, and/or sleeping gas. One character can even don disguises that make enemies steer clear. The mission, for those who choose to accept it, is to rescue Dr. O and Shannon from the Sinister Seven. This involves traversing sewers, avoiding bomb-throwing enemies, battling robots, disabling alarms, flipping switches, skiing down the Swiss Alps (using ski poles as weapons), killing machine gunners, and much more. This is a long, involved game with lots of variety and graphical detail, but it's very difficult. Fans of the franchise will miss the theme music. Includes password feature.

Monopoly

PUBLISHER: Parker Brothers. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Board Game, 1–8 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Monopoly for the NES does a nice job recreating the popular board game, letting up to eight players take turns rolling dice, moving a token around the board, earning money, drawing Community Chest and Chance Cards, and trying to bankrupt the other players by purchasing, renting, and selling houses, hotels, railroads, and other properties. The advantage of the video game lies in the computer handling all the accounting and money management tasks, giving the game a faster pace than its more tangible, more tactile counterpart. Animated tokens, a game editor (for giving players cash and properties before the game even begins), a timed mode, and a human looking

hand rolling the dice add to the fun. When compared to the SMS version, the NES game has better sound effects (including digitized voices), but the Sega game benefits from battery backup and up to 10 contestants. Also released for the Genesis, SNES, and numerous other systems.

Monster in My Pocket

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Based on the Matchbox toy line, *Monster in My Pocket* for the NES will delight fans of the small, soft, squishy playthings. Gamers guide The Vampire or The Monster (i.e. Frankenstein) through six nicely drawn, human-sized levels (including Jack's room, a sewer, a construction site, and an oriental palace), battling a nice assortment of familiar creatures, including Bigfoot, Medusa, Cerberus, Cyclops, zombies, ghouls, ogres, and gremlins. The Vampire and The Monster can punch their enemies and throw various objects at them. They can also climb stairs, run across rooftops, jump over fences, scale steel girders, ride a large hook, dodge huge golf balls, and much more. No matter how far either creature falls, the drop will not kill them, which is a nice change of pace from the typical side-scroller. *Monster in My Pocket* is easy to beat, but gorgeous graphics, fast-paced gameplay, and two-player simultaneous action make it a winner.

Monster Party

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

Monster Party is an average platformer in terms of gameplay (hit enemy with bat, step back, hit enemy again), but distinguishes itself with a goofy storyline, nice box art (*Famous Monsters of Filmland* fans will be pleased), atmospheric visuals (including blood-soaked skulls), and a cool mix of traditional and highly original monsters. Players guide a boy named Mark through eight levels (including dungeons, castle ruins, and a haunted house), battling (batting, actually) such creatures as Medusa, spiders, ghosts, a kitten-throwing cat, walking

pants, and a legless punk rocker. Mark can also transform into a flying, eyebeam-shooting gargoyle. To clear each level, Mark must find and enter all the doorways and defeat the bosses contained therein. Each boss leaves a key to an exit that Mark must also find.

Monster Truck Rally

PUBLISHER: INTV. DEVELOPER: Realtime Associates. Monster Truck Racing, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Published by INTV, the company that kept the Intellivision going after the Great Video Game Crash of 1983/1984, *Monster Truck Rally* offers nine events: Hill Climb, Drag Race, Bog, Car Crush, Tug-O-War, Sled Pull, Draw Bridge, Donuts, Combo Course, and Custom Track, the latter of which lets players race on tracks of their own creation. Unfortunately, the racing action is marred by the following: a slow truck (the computer's vehicle is prohibitively faster); confused obstacle placement (it's easy to run into stuff you can't quite see); shoddy physics (jumping is especially pathetic); and horrible controls (pressing a single button controls both acceleration and gear shifting). The 3/4 perspective evokes *R.C. Pro-Am*, but the game is nowhere near as good. Multi-player adapter compatible. Similar to: *Stadium Mug Buggies* (Intellivision).

Moon Ranger

PUBLISHER: Bunch Games. DEVELOPER: Odyssey Software. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Moon Ranger has players guiding a ship through space, firing plasma bolts at asteroids, frogs in bubbles, spinning aliens, claw-shaped cruisers, pairs of eyes, and other enemies. To increase the power of their weaponry, players can analyze and adapt the aliens' equipment, which includes wave rider beams, plus shots (which travel in loops), lightning blasts, flam (which travel like boomerangs), and "it" (the most powerful alien weapon). Players will also don a space suit and clumsily walk along shooting enemies and jumping on platforms and over spike pits and other obstacles. The *Moon Patrol*-like sixth level (of seven) has players driving an all-

terrain vehicle across the surface of the moon, jumping over obstacles and shooting at robots, space crabs, and bulb monsters. Other activities include recharging the suit's armor, recharging the all-terrain vehicle's shields, collecting four pieces of a gamma bomb, and destroying an element converter cannon. Unlicensed.

MotorCity Patrol

PUBLISHER: Matchbox. DEVELOPER: Source. Overhead View Action, 1 player. 1992.

In *MotorCity Patrol*, players take on the role of a cop, driving around city streets, patrolling five crisply drawn precincts: Financial District, Suburbs, Parks, Downtown MotorCity, and Waterfront. Objectives include arresting four types of people: citizens and speeders (by using the siren and giving chase); and robbers and public enemies (by shooting their tires or blocking their pathways). Vehicles to pursue include Matchbox versions of red vans and blue sports cars. At the end of each shift, players can use merit points earned to purchase bullets, car repairs, or the following car upgrades: super steering, turbo acceleration, higher top speeds, and super brakes. Although ambitious conceptually, *MotorCity Patrol*, which was the only Matchbox release for the NES, suffers from repetitious gameplay and the disruptive necessity of switching back and forth between the playfield and the map screen (the latter view courtesy of an "eye in the sky" police helicopter).

Ms. Pac-Man (Namco)

PUBLISHER: Namco. DEVELOPER: Namco. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1993.

The Namco version of *Ms. Pac-Man* for the NES is an excellent, straight-up take on Midway's oft-ported arcade classic (1981), but nitpickers will find some differences. The playfield is square (as opposed to rectangular) to accommodate the shape of television screens, the coloring isn't quite as rich, the introductory animation is missing, and the little clapperboards are absent from the intermissions (nitpicking indeed). The simple, yet addicting and fun gameplay remains, with players guiding the titular femme (Pac-Man's best

girl) around four different mazes, gobbling up pellets while avoiding color-coded ghosts Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Sue (actually, the ghosts in this version are unnamed). Eating bouncing fruit grants bonus points while gobbling Power Pellets lets *Ms. Pac-Man* temporarily turn the tables on the ghosts. Unlike the unlicensed Tengen version of *Ms. Pac-Man*, the Namco rendition does not include such tricked-up features as the Pac Booster, Strange mazes, vertical scrolling, or two-player simultaneous action. The sequel to *Pac-Man*, *Ms. Pac-Man* had numerous follow-ups, including *Super Pac-Man* (arcade, Atari 5200) and *Jr. Pac-Man* (arcade, Atari 2600).

Ms. Pac-Man (Tengen)

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1990.

The Tengen version of *Ms. Pac-Man* includes a straightforward port of Midway's 1981 arcade classic, but it also offers a host of unconventional features, including the use of a Pac Booster, which makes *Ms. Pac-Man* and *Pac-Man* (the character player two controls in simultaneous mode) move faster and leave speed streaks in their wake. Other unorthodox options include: a pair of two-player simultaneous modes (Cooperative and Competitive); four different difficulty levels (Normal, Easy, Hard, and Crazy); and a whopping 36 different mazes, including Big, Strange, Arcade (standard), and Mini (to cut down on vertical scrolling). Unlike in the more conventional Atari 7800 version, players cannot level select. The Tengen version of *Ms. Pac-Man* was also released for the Genesis and SNES, with both games incorporating the same extra features. Unlicensed.

M.U.L.E.

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Ozark Softscape. Business Simulator/Turn-Based Strategy, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A port of the 1983 computer game, *M.U.L.E.* (which stands for Multiple Use Labor Elements) is an intriguing game of strategy and economics set on the distant planet of Irata

(which is Atari spelled backwards). The goal is to amass wealth, which requires purchasing land, producing crops, mining minerals, making trades, bidding at auctions, and even going wumpus hunting. Mechanical donkeys perform the dirty work (growing food, mining, and producing energy) while earthquakes, acid rain, pirates, pest attacks, and other such calamities randomly disrupt player progress. There are three modes of play: Beginner, Standard, and Tournament, the latter of which includes crystite, which is a particularly valuable mineral, and collusion, which allows players to make private deals. Multi-tap adapter compatible.

M.U.S.C.L.E. Tag Team Match

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai.
Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

The acronym for “millions of unusual small creatures lurking everywhere,” *M.U.S.C.L.E.* for the NES is based on a Japanese comic book and cartoon called Kinnikuman, and on the resultant line of tiny, rubbery toys (which was released in the U.S. by Mattel). Players select from eight different wrestlers: M.U.S.C.L.E. Man, Robin Mask, Ashra Man, Terry Man, Geronimo, Larmen Man, Buffalo Man, and Wars Man, each of whom can pull off a special move, along with the following standard moves: punch, kick, jump, back drop, push, dropkick, clothesline, and flying body attack. The elevated view of the ring is from the side, and the screen scrolls a bit horizontally. With its blocky fighters, lack of detail, and washed out colors, *M.U.S.C.L.E.* looks primitive compared to other wrestling titles of the era, such as *Pro Wrestling* and *Ring King*, but fans of the franchise may want to check it out.

The Mutant Virus

PUBLISHER: American Softworks. DEVELOPER: Rocket Science Games. Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Although it borrows a key element (shrink down in size to battle an infestation) from the feature film *Fantastic Voyage* (which was made into an Atari 2600 video game), *Mutant Virus*

has more in common in terms of gameplay with the coin-op classics *Asteroids* (1979), *Space Dungeon* (1981), and *Robotron* (1982). Armed with a jetpack (which rotates and thrusts similar to the ship in *Asteroids*) and a vaccine blaster, players fly around a series of single-screen rooms, shooting computer virus clusters while trying to avoid virus-infected areas. The blaster has three types of charges: automatic, short fuse, and long fuse. In addition to viruses, the infected computer has bits of code (in the form of capsules) that act as power-ups. These include shields, super guns (bullets bounce off walls), and countermeasures (clusters of antibodies). Regrettably, despite its old-school sensibilities, *Mutant Virus* lacks the fun, intensity, and excitement of the aforementioned arcade games.

Mystery Quest

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: Carry Lab.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

On a quest to find four magic talismans (wealth, wisdom, happiness, and peace), a young boy named Hao must explore in and around four mystery castles, each riddled with mazes, underground passages, and such creatures as snakes, gophers, wasps, bats, and dragons. To battle the various enemies, the boy can shoot magic in the form of round projectiles that can be upgraded (doubled) by finding a scroll. Other helpful items to pick up include: vitality for maintaining energy; an SOS raft for swimming; keys for opening doors; arrows showing which direction to go; and power boots and a power helmet for breaking blocks. Castles are made of blocks, some of which contain springs for jumping higher. The mountains, chimneys, clouds, and other objects to jump on have a primitive look, matching the clunky gameplay. Fans of the genre should stick with *Super Mario Bros.*

NARC

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Rare. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Based on Williams' 1988 arcade game, *NARC* for the NES was approved by Just Say No International, which was a product of the

Reagan-era War on Drugs. Players, as Max Force, must battle their way through nine side-scrolling levels, using a machine gun and rocket launcher to blow away thugs, dealers, pushers, gangsters, terrorists, and other minions in drug kingpin Mr. Big's employ. In addition, players must dodge land mines, destroy helicopters, battle pit bulls and mutant bugs, confiscate cash, open locked doors (with color-coded safe cards), destroy vats of drugs, and drive a Porsche 911 Turbo Carrera NarcMobile. There are nine seedy sectors to battle through, including Junkyard, K.W.A.K. Street (called K.R.A.K. Street in the arcade version), Sunset Strip, and Skyhigh's Nursery. The arcade original, which benefited from digitized graphics and sound effects, unlimited continues, and faster, more intense gameplay, was designed by Eugene "Defender" Jarvis.

NES Open Tournament Golf

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Sports/Golf, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

Like many later Nintendo sports games, such as *Mario Tennis* (various) and *Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour* (GameCube), *NES Open* stars the company's famous mascot, the every-lovable Mario. The Italian plumber competes for top ranking against 36 computerized golfers, including his brother Luigi. There are three modes of play (Stroke, Match, and Tournament), three courses (U.S., U.K, and Japan), and a trio of three-tap swing meters (slow, medium, and fast). Ball spin, wind speed, club choice, hazards, and other factors come into play in this agreeable, finely tuned golf title. Includes battery backup and typical overhead and behind-the-golfer viewpoints.

NES Play Action Football

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Sports/Football, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

This flawed, but ambitious football game has numerous features, including: eight teams; NFLPA licensing (meaning real players are used); cooperative play against the computer; a halftime show; replays; diving tackles; good controls; voice effects (however terrible); injured

players hauled away on stretchers (and the resultant player substitutions); and line judges who bring out chains to measure close calls. The view of the field is from a diagonal/overhead perspective, which is highly unusual for a football title, and the game begins with a nice rendition of the "National Anthem." Unfortunately, gameplay is terribly slow. Multi-tap adapter compatible.

NFL Football

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Enteractive.
Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

The first NES football game licensed by the National Football League (though not by the NFLPA, meaning real player names aren't used), *NFL Football* lets gamers play as any of the 28 teams from the 1988 season. The side-scrolling action is viewed from overhead, with the camera zooming in when a pass approaches a receiver. Players can enhance their team with two upgrades, but this increases the chance of random penalties and fumbles. Other features include: coin toss, sacks, kickoffs (including onside kicks), and lots of offensive and defensive plays (including audibles). Regrettably, poor controls ruin the fun.

Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: Gremlin Graphics. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 player. 1993.

World Championship Racing for the NES is roughly patterned after the Super NES version (complete with in-the-cockpit perspective), but the in-game information (lap time, mph, and the like) is placed in a strip along the bottom of the screen (as opposed to varying locations around the top), making the data less accessible. Also, though the game is certainly playable, the courses are more simplistic in design, the graphics aren't as sharp, and the animation isn't as smooth. On a more positive note, the game does have some nice features, including selectable gears (automatic and manual), selectable tires (hard, soft, and wet), pit stops, qualifying laps, Full Season mode, and tips from Mansell

himself. Includes password feature. A surprisingly good version of the game was also released for the Game Boy.

A Nightmare on Elm Street

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Platform/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

This 8-bit take on the *Nightmare on Elm Street* film franchise (which began in 1984) offers more than typical running, jumping, monster-punching action (though there's plenty of that). Players, as Dream Warriors, must enter buildings to gather bones and battle the ultimate nightmare himself — Freddy Krueger — in his various horrifying forms. If the player's sleep meter gets too low (by inactivity or not drinking enough coffee), he or she will enter the Dream World, in which Dream Warrior icons can turn players into a shuriken-throwing Shadow Warrior, a javelin-throwing Acrobat, or a magic-firing Necromancer. Enemies to battle include skeletons, hounds, bats, zombies, and more. Multi-tap adapter compatible.

Nightshade

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Third-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1992.

Modeled after such comic book heroes as Dick Tracy, Batman, and The Spirit, *Nightshade* is an encyclopedia researcher by day and a hero by night. Outfitted in a trench coat, fedora, and shades, *Nightshade* must stop crime lord Sutekh and his evil minions. This requires guiding a cursor around the screen, examining clues, interrogating townsfolk, and finding and using gas masks, whistles, food, screwdrivers, keys, bombs, crowbars, and other strategically important items. There are obstacles to jump over and some lackluster fighting, but the appeal of this slowly paced game lies in using your brain to solve mysteries and escape death traps.

1942

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

A too-easy port of Capcom's highly playable arcade game (which was released in 1984), *1942* for the NES has players piloting the World War II-era Super Ace over land and sea, shooting enemy planes while dodging their bullets. Destroying complete red formations emits POW power-ups, which can be grabbed for double machine guns, triple firepower (via an ally on either side of the plane), extra points, or an extra "loop the loop." The looping maneuver, which is useful when the screen gets overly crowded, temporarily removes the plane from the heat of battle. NES owners who are fans of the "194x" series should stick with *1943: The Battle of Midway*, which is *1942*'s more challenging, more versatile sequel. *1942* was also released for the Game Boy Color.

1943: The Battle of Midway

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Despite the exclusion of the two-player simultaneous mode, *1943* for the NES is an expertly programmed port of Capcom's own 1987 arcade game and is a nice upgrade over *1942*. Players pilot a P-38 fighter plane over Pacific waters, shooting bombers, aircraft carrier gun sites, and other enemies. As in *1942*, the plane can loop out of harm's way. Power-ups to grab include super shells, three-way shots, energy tanks, and more. Exclusive to the NES version is a password feature for saving progress and the ability for players to distribute points to power-up their plane's offensive power, defensive power, energy level, special weapons, and the time limit for those special weapons. Followed by: *1944: The Loop Master* (arcade), *Strikers 1945* (arcade, PlayStation), and other sequels.

Ninja Crusaders

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: Sammy. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Ninja Crusaders looks and plays enough like *Ninja Gaiden* to call it a clone or a copycat, not a mere homage. However, *Ninja Crusaders* does offer two-player simultaneous action (ala *Shadow of the Ninja*), and it lets players trans-

form their ninja into one of four different animals: a tiger (claw swipe); a scorpion (tail whip); an eagle (no attacking ability); or a flying dragon (waves of fire). Standard weapons include shurikens, a whip, a bo staff, and a sword. The mission is to battle robots, bats, drones, wraiths, and other enemies through 10 levels: Civilization's Ruin, Watery Grave (adding swimming to the running, jumping formula), Canyon Trap, Lake of Chaos, Devil's Forest, Ironfist Castle, Hurricane Crusier [SP], Wraith's Lair, Shadow Village, and Temple of the Cursed. One-hit kills make the game a challenge.

Ninja Gaiden

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

Infused with style, flair, and hard-as-nails, hack-and-slash gameplay, *Ninja Gaiden* kicked off what would quickly become one of the most revered series in the NES library. Ryu Hayabusa, the agile ninja players control, moves with fluidity, speed, and grace as he runs, crouches, climbs (ladders), flips, and jumps (including wall-spring jumps and wall-spring climbing jumps) his way through six levels of caves, icy cliffs, temples, and other venues of non-stop action. Ryu dispatches enemies with quick sword-thrusts, and he can slash lamps and other objects to reveal such pick-ups as points, spiritual strength, and the following weapons: throwing stars, windmill throwing stars, time freezes, a jump & slash technique, and an invincible fire wheel that rotates around Ryu. A powerful musical score and cinematic cut scenes complement the kill-or-be-killed action. Also released for the Game Gear and Atari Lynx. The arcade rendition of *Ninja Gaiden* (Tecmo, 1988) was a two-player combat game somewhat similar to *Double Dragon*.

Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Like its progenitor, *Ninja Gaiden II* offers up a heaping helping of hack-and-slash action,

supplemented by killer platforming, dramatic music, and sweeping, anime-style cut scenes. Gameplay is similar — defeat enemies with quick sword-thrusts, turn flips, jump off walls and over fire, spikes, and other obstacles — but this time Ryu can throw fireballs, climb on walls (as opposed to just ladders), and split his body into three for a multiple attack (which is a cool and powerful effect). In addition, the game has more detailed backgrounds, new characters (including Ashtar, who wields the titular Sword of Chaos), and some fresh (if frustrating) environmental hazards, such as mountain winds that can blow Ryu into deadly chasms. Followed by: *Ninja Gaiden Shadow* (Game Boy).

Ninja Gaiden III: The Ancient Ship of Doom

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Ninja Gaiden III begins with a cut scene of a Ryu impersonator sending the beautiful Irene Lew plummeting off a cliff, effectively setting the stage for the final game in the NES *Ninja Gaiden* trilogy. Players once again guide a crisply controlled Ryu Hayabusa as he runs, jumps, flips, and battles his way through gorgeous levels (jungles, caves, the desert) and a variety of enemies (lots of robots and monsters in this case). The weapons of the previous two games return, but Ryu does have some new attack methods, including vacuum wave art, which is a blade that can be thrown up and down, and a dragon spirit sword upgrade, which increases the range of Ryu's standard attack. Ryu can also attack while hanging from a wall, climb to the top of a wall (as opposed to having to jump to the opposite wall first), and move hand-over-hand via pipes and jungle ivy. Also released for the Atari Lynx. Followed by: *Ninja Gaiden Trilogy* (compilation for the SNES), *Ninja Gaiden* (3D remake for the Xbox), and numerous sequels and offshoots.

Ninja Kid

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1986.

In *Ninja Kid*, players control the titular “junior defender of human rights,” who nimbly runs, jumps (over holes), and shoots his way through the monster-filled Demon Island. Ninja Kid’s standard weapon is daggers, but he can acquire iron stars, boomerangs, feathers (for invincibility), and fire flames. From time to time, he will be assisted by Pegasus (acts as a shield), Big Eagle (stops enemy movement), and Old Witch (throws sand at enemies). His ultimate goal is to destroy Demon Castle, but he must first conquer four objective-specific “fighting fields,” including: Dog Fight (fly on a kite, kill 10 demons); Poison Fields (collect 10 demon spirits); Blazing Inferno (light 10 candles); and Guerilla Warfare (kill 10 demons). Each fighting field is accessible via a Demon Island overworld map. Ninja Kid will also face the ruler of Demon Hell, which features vertical scrolling action.

Nintendo World Championships 1990

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Side-Scrolling Platform/Sports Car
Racing/Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1990.

Created for the 1990 Nintendo World Championships, this specially produced cartridge contains modified versions of three NES classics: *Super Mario Bros.* (collect 50 coins), *Rad Racer* (race on a special NWC course), and *Tetris* (earn the high score). During the official competition, gamers had 6:21 to play all three mini-games, but the cartridge itself contains dipswitches that can alter the time limit. Often considered the holy grail of 8-bit gaming, *Nintendo World Championships 1990* is extremely rare. When it shows up for sale on the collector’s market, it commands thousands of dollars. Only 116 were produced: 90 cartridges in the traditional gray format (given to NWC finalists) and 26 housed in *Legend of Zelda*-like gold casing (given to winners of a *Nintendo Power* contest).

Nintendo World Cup

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Technos.
Sports/Soccer, 1–4 players (simultaneous).
1990.

Nintendo World Cup offers 13 selectable teams, each rated according to such attributes

as speed, passing, and defense. Each team is granted five super kicks per half, and the players look like the guys from *River City Ransom* (a brawler published and developed by Technos). The overhead view action displays a horizontal field and scrolls in all directions, and there are six different field types: grass, soil, sand, bumpy, concrete, and ice. Interestingly, gamers have direct control over just one of the players on their team, but can order other members of the team to pass, tackle, shoot, and dive. Prior to each match, players of this fun, innovative game must set their team’s offensive and defensive strategies, further differentiating the cartridge from other soccer titles. Multi-player adapter compatible. Includes password feature.

Nobunaga’s Ambition

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1–8 players (simultaneous).
1989.

Set during the Warring States period of 16th century Japan, *Nobunaga’s Ambition* puts players in the role of Nobunaga Oda, a daimyo (feudal lord) with ambitions of becoming a Shogun and ruling the entire nation. Actually, there are several historical daimyos to choose from, each rated according to age, health, drive, luck, charm, and intelligence. Daimyos rule a single fief, but can conquer more as the game wears on. This is achieved by recruiting soldiers, training an army, buying weapons, negotiating with other daimyos, hiring ninjas to attack enemies, increasing peasant morale, dealing with natural disasters, and much more. Battles take place on a top-down hex map (consisting of plains, mountains, hills, water, towns, and castles), with each player taking turns selecting from 21 different commands, including move (soldiers or the daimyo), tax, marry, build, view, bribe, and trade. Includes battery backup. Also released for the Genesis and SNES.

Nobunaga’s Ambition II

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1–4 players (simultaneous).
1991.

Thanks to enhanced graphical detail and the introduction of samurai, *Nobunaga's Ambition II* is an improvement over the first game in the series. Four hundred different samurai are available for sending into battle, each with distinct abilities and personalities. Only four players can go at it this time around, but the game does offer five skill levels, 38 battle maps and castles, and two scenarios: Warlord Rivalry (starts March, 1560) and Nobunaga's Ambition (starts March, 1582), the latter of which finds Nobunaga Oda already in control of central Japan. Gameplay consists of selecting commands from the main display, with the view switching to a top-down hex map whenever war breaks loose. The objective is to control more and more fiefs, each of which varies according to such data as gold, food, land value, trade, culture, castle defense, soldiers, and more. Includes battery backup. Similar to: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Followed by: *Nobunaga's Ambition: Lord of Darkness* (SNES).

North & South

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Action Strategy, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

In *North & South*, players can relive the Civil War and, as the Union or the Confederacy, even re-write a portion of American history, namely the years 1861–1864 (1865 is unavailable as a starting year since the South was largely decimated by that point). Gameplay consists of the following: moving troops from state to state (around a map of eastern U.S.) in order to capture towns; combining units to strengthen weaker ones (the maximum is 3 cannons, 9 cavalry, and 18 infantry); evaluating the strength of opposing armies; robbing a moving train (during special side-scrolling stages); and attacking opposing armies. Battle scenes take place via an overhead perspective, making the horses, soldiers, bridges, and other items look very small. Selectable factors include Indian and Mexican attacks, storm clouds, and European reinforcements. Despite the wartime theme, the game is lighthearted in tone and appearance.

Operation Secret Storm

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color

Dreams. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1991.

It's obvious from the beginning that *Operation Secret Storm* is an unlicensed game, and not just because of its terrible music, sub par graphics, and shoddy gameplay (collision detection is miserable, and the protagonist slides when he stops). Saddam Hussein is pictured on the front of the box, with the word "Dick Tator" written on his partially obscured nametag (something Nintendo would never have allowed). Players guide a CIA agent named George as he runs, jumps, and battles his way through 10 areas, including oilfields, an oil refinery, scud missile sites, a village, and a desert airstrip. Enemies to punch, kick, shoot, and throw grenades at include trigger happy soldiers, chemical warfare specialists, guards wielding lead pipes, mutated animals (some of which look ridiculous), and even Saddam himself. Ironically (considering the fact that George fights for America), the first boss is an eagle.

Operation Wolf

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Sporting four side-scrolling levels of play (each with six missions), *Operation Wolf* has players pointing the Nintendo Zapper at the screen, firing a machine gun and launching grenades at helicopters, gun boats, armored cars, evil generals, and terrorist soldiers while being careful to avoid killing hostages, children, nurses, and prisoners. Shooting vultures, pigs, chickens, and magazines grants additional ammo while dynamite blows up all on-screen enemies. Other items provide reduced levels of injury, extra fire power, and rapid fire. This is a nice port of Taito's 1987 arcade game, which was equipped with a mounted, positional gun.

Orb-3D

PUBLISHER: Hi-Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: The Software Toolworks. Ball-and-Paddle/Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1990.

Packaged with a cheaply produced pair of 3D glasses, *Orb-3D* is sort of like a one-player version of *Pong*, but with puzzles to solve. The player controls a pair of paddles (called force

shields) placed on the left and right sides of a grid-like playfield. As a Millennium Orb spacecraft moves in a spherical pattern (giving the game its 3D visual effect) back and forth across the screen, gamers must keep the orb in play by bouncing it off the paddles. In addition, a button must be pressed to make the orb dive into various targets on the grid. Hitting the targets, usually in a particular order, is how each of the game's 30 "enigma chambers" is beaten. Each chamber is a puzzle of sorts, including challenges based on tic-tac-toe, bowling, and dice. *Orb-3D* is a port of the computer game *Beyond the Black Hole* (1989), which boasted 35 levels.

Othello

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Kawada.
Board Game, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1988.

A solid rendition of the classic board game, *Othello* has player taking turns placing round pieces on a green 8x8 grid of squares, trying to trap the other player. When one piece is trapped between two opponent pieces (horizontally, vertically or diagonally), it will turn the other color (one player uses black pieces while the other uses white). The objective of the game is to have more of your color on the board than the other player. Games can be timed (20, 30, or 40 minutes) or played with no clock, and the one-player mode offers four difficulty levels, some of which allow for taking back moves. Unfortunately, unlike certain computer versions, there are no beginner-friendly options for showing all possible moves or having the computer suggest moves. The first video game rendition of *Othello* was released in 1980 for the Atari 2600.

Overlord

PUBLISHER: Virgin Games. DEVELOPER: Probe Software. Action Strategy, 1 player. 1993.

In *Overlord*, players are sent by the Galactic Federation to be-

come supreme ruler of four planet systems, defeating Rorn (leader of an evil alien race) and his trio of allies in the process. By pointing and clicking on various icons, players, in real time, can do the following: set up farming stations; mine for minerals; adjust taxation rates; build a fleet (with a maximum of 32 ships); purchase an atmosphere processor, a solar satellite, weapons, and other items; monitor economic information; load and unload cargo ships; launch, land, and fuel battle cruisers; attack and colonize planets; transport food, people, fuel, and energy between colonies; attack enemies with hoverships; fire missiles at planetary shield installations; and much more. The busy screen displays running text, outer space, planetary surfaces, the aforementioned icons, and more. Based on the 1990 computer game.

Pac-Man (Namco)

PUBLISHER: Namco. DEVELOPER: Namco. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1993.

Although it lacks the introductory animation denoting ghost names and point values, *Pac-Man* for the NES is an excellent port of Midway's 1980 coin-op classic (which, in 2005, was dubbed "the most successful coin-oper-



More arcade fun on the NES: *Operation Wolf*, *Super Sprint*, and *Gyruss*, each complete with box, cartridge, and manual.

ated game in history” by the *Guinness Book of World Records*). Players guide the famous pie-shaped fellow around a maze, munching pellets and fruit (two pieces of fruit per screen) while avoiding four color-coded ghosts (in the arcades, the ghosts were nicknamed Inky, Blinky, Pinky, and Clyde). By eating one of four Power Pellets, Pac-Man can temporarily turn the tables on the ghosts. Gobbling ghosts grants progressively higher points, and a gobbled ghost will return to its home in the middle of the maze, only to return shortly thereafter. Sequels to *Pac-Man*, such as *Ms. Pac-Man* and *Jr. Pac-Man*, would introduce maze variations and other upgrades, but *Pac-Man* remains a timeless classic.

Pac-Man (Tengen)

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Namco. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Unlike the Tengen version of *Ms. Pac-Man* for the NES, which introduced a variety of unorthodox features to shake up the dot-munching gameplay, the Tengen rendition of *Pac-Man* (which was first released as a licensed game, and then as an unlicensed game) is identical to the Namco-published *Pac-Man* for the NES. Naturally, the packaging is different, most notably the Tengen release (which was unlicensed) naming the ghosts on the back of the box (the Namco version ghosts are unnamed, even in the manual). One of the most famous video games of all time, *Pac-Man* was ported to the Atari 2600, Intellivision, Atari 5200, Game Boy, and numerous other systems.

Pac-Mania

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

An excellent port of Namco’s thoroughly entertaining (if underrated) arcade game (1987), *Pac-Mania* is a lot like *Pac-Man* (guide the pie-shaped icon around mazes, gobble dots while avoiding ghosts), but with some interesting differences, including: pseudo-3D graphics; themed mazes (Block Town, Pac-Man’s Park, Sandbox Land, and Jungly Steps); scrolling playfields; a pair of new ghosts named Funky and Spunky; an isometric perspective;

and, most importantly, the ability for Pac-Man to jump. In addition, there are two new power pills: green, which provides a temporary speed boost, and red, which gives double points. The clapping and cheering sounds have been removed, and the graphics aren’t quite as polished (an understandable difference), but this hard-to-find game is one of the best arcade ports in the NES library. There’s even a new feature: the ability to level select. One of many *Pac-Man* sequels, *Pac-Mania* was also released for the Genesis. Unlicensed.

Palamedes

PUBLISHER: Hot-B. DEVELOPER: Hot-B. Action Puzzle/Slide-and-Shoot, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Palamedes borrows from the “falling block” formula established by *Tetris*, but alters gameplay considerably. As rows of color-coded dice descend from the top of the screen, players, guiding a little guy who runs back and forth along the bottom of the playfield, must make them disappear by shooting them. The little guy’s ammo is a die, and the player can cycle through the colors/numbers on that die at any time. For a descending die to disappear, players must shoot it with a die of the same color/number. By eliminating dice in a particular order (1–6, for example), players can make entire rows of dice disappear. Like its coin-op counterpart (Taito, 1990), *Palamedes* for the NES offers two-player split-screen action. However, the arcade game has more realistic looking dice. Both offer great, strategic fun. Also released for the Game Boy.

Panic Restaurant

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Panic Restaurant puts players in the role of a chef named Cookie, who must run, jump, duck, climb, and battle enemies (pizzas, hot-dogs, toast, food-themed bosses, and the like) through six pastel-colored, obstacle-ridden levels of play: Appetizer, Soup, Salad, Fish, Meat, and Dessert. Cookie’s standard weapon is a frying pan, but he can pick up a large spoon, Frisbee-like plates, eggs (for throwing), a huge skil-

let (which grants temporary invincibility), and a pogo stick-like fork. Other items to grab include candy (for health, ironically enough) and coins (for use in bonus stage slot machines). *Mega Man* fans should enjoy *Panic Restaurant* to some degree, but it's short and easy to beat.

Paperboy

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Mindscape. Mission-Based Racing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Based on the wildly popular 1984 Atari arcade game, which stood out thanks to amusing voice effects, unusual gameplay, and a handlebars controller, *Paperboy* for the NES has players riding a bicycle up a narrow pathway consisting primarily of a sidewalk and the left side of the road, throwing newspapers at houses lining the left side of the screen. Hitting the windows of non-subscribers nets points, as does hitting the porches and paperboxes of subscribers. There are other targets as well, such as bushes, tombstones, and garbage cans, but numerous obstacles (including motorcycles, tornados, breakdancers, dogs, and cars) make things difficult. Aiming is tough, due in part to the game's isometric perspective. The game plays okay, but is a huge disappointment visually, especially when compared to the more colorful, more detailed, more faithfully ported Master System version. The NES game does add a two-player mode, but it lacks the trio of difficulty levels found in the arcades and Master System. Also released for the Game Boy, Atari Lynx, Genesis, Nintendo 64 (remade in 3D), and other systems.

Paperboy 2

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Mindscape. Mission-Based Racing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

The console sequel to the arcade classic *Paperboy* (Atari, 1984), *Paperboy 2* features similar game-

play, but adds the following fresh wrinkles: new obstacles (including gargoyles, ghosts, and sewer monsters); new types of houses (including mansions, haunted houses, and kids' club-houses); the choice to play as a female cyclist; and, most importantly, obstacles and houses on both sides of the road. As in *Paperboy*, levels are set up like days of the week, with each level ending in a bonus round. If the player misses hitting the porch or paperbox of a subscriber's house, that house becomes a non-subscriber. If the player hits every subscriber house in a level, a former subscriber will re-subscribe. Hitting non-subscribers' windows, runaway baby carriages, burglars, and other such targets nets extra points. Also released for the Genesis, SNES, Game Gear, and Game Boy.

Peek-A-Boo Poker

PUBLISHER: Panesian. DEVELOPER: Panesian. Gambling, 1 player. 1991.

One of three adult games produced by Panesian for the NES (*Hot Slots* and *Bubble Bath Babes* are the other two), *Peek-A-Boo Poker* is a poorly programmed, hard-to-find strip poker simulator that lets players select



Paperboy is based on Atari's 1984 arcade game, but *Paperboy 2* was only released for home systems, including the NES.

from three different 8-bit babes: Full House Francine, Pok-er Penny, and Double Dealing Debbie. For every \$1,000 the player wins (up to \$5,000), a picture of the girl in question appears on screen, each time more scantily clad, meaning the game does contain nudity. Uncensored.

Pestertinator: The Western Exterminator

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Like all Color Dreams-published games for the NES, *Pestertinator* is uncensored, meaning the company produced the game without agreeing to Nintendo's Machiavellian licensing fees. Amusingly enough, however, the game does star a licensed character: Kernel Kleanup, who is the black-and-white, top hat-wearing mascot for the obscure Western Exterminator Company. Players guide the slow, poorly animated Kernel across the interconnected floors and up and down the stairs of such two-story constructs as a house, a hotel, and a warehouse, bopping badly drawn bees, beetles, spiders, flies, and other creatures with a hammer in order to complete the area. Mixing up the action a bit is a pair of shooting levels in which gamers pilot a helicopter and swim in the sea. Clumsy controls, repetitious music, and hideous coloring help make *Pestertinator* a typical entry in the Color Dreams library.

Phantom Fighter

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

In *Phantom Fighter*, players are thrust into the role of Kenchi, a Chinese martial arts expert who must rid eight towns of zombie-like Kyonshies, who come in a number of shapes, sizes, and colors. As these undead baddies jump around scratching with their claws, players must dodge, punch, and kick them. Progressing through the game grants players a nice variety of new martial arts skills (jump kicks, windmill jumps, better punches, the ability to run faster, and the like) and such special weapons as a sacred sword, a tonken, and an enemy-freez-

ing talisman. Thanks to detailed graphics and fitting music, the game does a nice job of immersing players in a distinctly Chinese environment. The combat system gets the job done as well. This is a much better game than FCI's more well-known (i.e. infamous) *Hydride*.

Pictionary: The Game of Video Quick Draw

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Board Game, 1 or more players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on the once-popular board game, *Pictionary* has players using the NES control pad to try and draw a picture based on a particular word. To advance his or her piece on the board, the drawing player's own team must guess what is being drawn. Clunky drawing controls and the necessity for players to close their eyes or look away when a word is being given make this an awkward process. In addition to drawing, there are four arcade-style mini-games: Attack of the Paint Zombies (upside down *Space Invaders*); The Warehouse Shuffle (move and stack crates); Four Alarm Rescue (similar to *Circus Atari*); and Leapin' Energy Capsules! (jump on platforms to catch energy balls).

Pin Bot

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Rare. Pinball, 1–4 players (alternating). 1990.

A video version of Williams' 1986 pinball machine, *Pin Bot* for the NES does a nice job incorporating most of the elements found in the arcade original, including: the robotic voice (which, admittedly, is a bit choppy); the solar system theme; multi-ball play; jet bumpers; and the mysterious robot visor. In addition, there are a number of new features well-suited to the video format, such as different ball shapes, six progressive levels of difficulty, and enemies that attack the flippers and steal the ball. The playfield scrolls vertically, but contains a split to show the flippers at all times. For those wanting a more accurate port of the game, it was included in *Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection* for the PS2, PSP, and Nintendo Wii.

Pinball

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Pinball, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1985.

Despite the lack of a nudge button for shaking the table, this NES launch title plays a pretty realistic game of pinball, especially in terms of sound effects, flipper movement, and ball physics. The table, which features bumpers, playing cards, seals, baby chicks popping out of eggs, spinners, and other targets, is basic in design and extends vertically over two non-scrolling screens, each of which has a pair of flippers. There's also a bonus stage screen where players guide Mario as he walks back and forth along the bottom of the playfield, using a construction girder to rebound the pinball back up into a playfield containing 12 bingo lamps, two bumpers, and a lady who walks back and forth along the top. When the damsel in distress falls, Mario should save her.

Pinball Quest

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Pinball, 1–4 players (alternating). 1990.

Pinball Quest features four different tables, the foremost of which — RPG Mode — is a vertically scrolling castle comprised of the following stages: Graveyard, Witch, Mines, River, Throne Room, and Final Battle. Targets to aim for in RPG Mode include tombstones, ghosts, knights, skull bumpers, turtles, and candles (among other items), and players can earn gold to shop for stoppers and stronger flippers. The storyline, which is told via text pop-ups, involves rescuing a princess kidnapped by goblins. The other three tables in this cartridge are more traditional. These include: Pop! Pop!, which has a bowling and billiards theme; Circus, which includes slot machine bonus levels; and Viva! Golf, which features sand traps, gophers, and water hazards. Ball physics are loopy, but *Pinball Quest* offers varied objectives and loads of fun.

Pipe Dream

PUBLISHER: Bullet-Proof Software. DEVELOPER: Distinctive Software. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

A nice port of the addictively challenging computer game (1989), *Pipe Dream* has play-

ers placing pipe pieces of varying shapes strategically on a grid. As play begins, a pipe piece appears, and that piece must be positioned on the board. And then another appears and so on. To remove a previously placed pipe, a new one can be placed on top of it. The objective is to construct a continuous pipe, enabling a substance called “floozy” to flow unobstructed through said pipe. Level progression requires floozy to pass through a certain number of pipes. Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *Pipe Dreams 3D* (PlayStation).

Pirates!

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Rare.
Action/Adventure/Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

An excellent version of the computer game, which was called *Sid Meier's Pirates!* (1987), *Pirates!* for the NES is an elaborate adventure in which players portray one of four different swashbuckling scoundrels: an English Buccaneer, a Dutch Adventurer, a Spanish Renegade, or a French Explorer. Gameplay consists of the following: bartering with enemy merchants; plundering towns; laying siege to forts; sword fighting with garrison commanders (from a side-view perspective); firing cannons at an armada of naval foes (from an overhead perspective); negotiating with crooked governors; getting married (aarrrr!); visiting taverns; and much more. Like its Genesis cousin (*Pirates! Gold*), *Pirates!* includes battery backup. Followed by: *Sid Meier's Pirates!: Live the Life* (Xbox).

Platoon

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Platform Shooter/First-Person Shooter/Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Based on Oliver Stone's 1986 war movie, which won the Oscar for best picture, *Platoon* for the NES has players guiding an American soldier through the heart of a confusing, dead end-laden, Vietnamese jungle, dodging air strikes, booby traps, and other obstacles while shooting (with an M-16 rifle) and bombing (with grenades) guerillas and snipers. Innocent

villagers should not be killed or it will lower the player's morale — six dead innocents equals game over. The Jungle & Village stage features a side-view perspective while Tunnel System and The Bunker have players guiding a crosshair targeting sight. The final stage, 3-D Jungle, shows the soldier from behind. In addition to shooting and getting shot (cheap hits are plentiful), players will search for such helpful items as a torch, a map, flares, a compass, and medical supplies.

Popeye

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

Despite missing a few relatively minor flourishes, *Popeye* for the NES is an excellent port of Nintendo's own 1982 coin-op classic. Players guide the beloved Sailor Man as he walks across floors, climbs ladders and stairs, and catches floating objects (hearts, musical notes, or letters spelling out HELP) tossed down by Olive Oyl. While Popeye gathers objects, he must avoid Bernard the vulture, the Seahag's bouncing skulls, and a bottle-throwing Brutus in hot pursuit. Popeye can punch the skulls and bottles, and, after eating a can of spinach (one per screen), he can punch Brutus and the vulture. The aforementioned absences in the NES port include: the "Popeye!! Catch" text and Popeye holding out a flower at the beginning of the game; the celebratory giant Popeye face that appears after the third screen; Wimpy eating hamburgers during the second screen; and various other nitpicks. A must-own for *Donkey Kong* fans. Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Intellivision, and ColecoVision.

P.O.W.: Prisoners of War

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1989.

Other than missing the two-player simultaneous mode found in the arcade original (SNK, 1988), *P.O.W.* for the NES plays pretty well. As special forces agent Bart, gamers must walk (somewhat slowly) and climb their way through four nicely illustrated levels (Escape from Prison Camp, Attacking the Industrial

Area, Guerilla Attack in the Jungle, and Destruction of Communications Headquarters), punching and kicking (including jump kicks) commandoes, frogmen, bike soldiers, green berets, and other enemies along the way. By entering huts and vehicles or defeating certain bad guys, Bart can obtain grenades, brass knuckles, a bullet-proof vest, a combat knife, and a machine gun.

Power Blade

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Thanks to the all-powerful Master Computer, Earth of 2191 has become a veritable utopia. Unfortunately, alien terrorists attack, taking the computer off-line. It is up to the player, as Nova (the computer's chief security officer), to restore systems control. To achieve his objective, Nova, who looks like the Terminator, must run, jump (on platforms and over gaps and other obstacles), climb, and fire a boomerang-like weapon through six sectors, destroying such enemies as ghosts, soldiers, bats, and spaceships. The boomerang can be powered up considerably, and Nova can also hurl grenades and don a metal, shield-like suit. In each of the game's six selectable sectors (each of which are timed), Nova must find the agent assigned to that sector. Completing all six sectors grants Nova entrance to the control center. *Mega Man* fans should enjoy this high quality game.

Power Blade 2

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

As in the original *Power Blade*, Special Agent Nova wields a formidable, upgradeable, boomerang-like blade. However, Nova has learned a few new tricks, including the ability to slide under low obstacles and enemy fire (ala *Mega Man 3*). In addition, each of the game's four selectable stages contains a special power suit: the Newt Suit allows Nova to cling to and move along walls and ceilings; the Wet Suit lets him move quickly under water; the Rocket Suit enables him to fly; and the Patriot Suit has twin orbs that circle around Nova's body and absorb

enemy fire. While Nova is wearing one of the suits, the weapon becomes the Power Blade, which is more powerful than the boomerang-like blade, but doesn't return. Enemies to destroy include wall cannons, robots, fish, slime monsters, caterpillars, and more.

Power Punch II

PUBLISHER: American Softworks. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Sports/Boxing, 1 player. 1992.

Power Punch II was originally intended to be a follow-up to *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*, but Tyson's legal difficulties (i.e. the trial for the rape of Desiree Washington) during the production of the game caused Nintendo to back out of the project and Beam Software to change the principal boxer's name to Mark "Tough Guy" Tyler (his appearance was altered as well). Gameplay evokes *Punch-Out!!* to some degree (the view is behind the player's fighter), but a variety of features were added, including: cut scenes; a side-view training mode (which takes place on an intergalactic transport shuttle); and 12 alien opponents, including 9763 Borg, Helmet Skull, Grathnox 4 (who's a tank from the waist down), and "Fighting" Fly-Mo (who's a flying saucer from the waist down). Despite these additions, *Punch-Out!!* is a far superior game. *Power Punch II* was initially produced under the working title of "Mike Tyson's Intergalactic Power Punch."

P'radikus Conflict

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. Color Dreams. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

The space vessel in *P'radikus Conflict* rotates and thrusts like the ship in *Asteroids*, but the screen scrolls in all directions, making the game more like *Bosconian* or *Sinistar*. Unlike the comparative arcade classics, however, *P'radikus Conflict* has slow, unresponsive controls, is far too easy (thanks to dumb enemies that fire slow projectiles), and is a bit more complex. While blasting ships out of the sky, *P'radikus* pilots will earn credits to purchase fuel, armor, shields, warp drive, and such weapons as shock waves, mines, missiles, atomic cannons, and clocking devices. The mission-

based action has players orbiting planets, destroying outposts, freeing aliens, and more. Somewhat similar to: *Star Control* (Genesis). Unlicensed.

Predator

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Pack-In Video. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Disappointingly mediocre, *Predator* puts gamers in the role of Dutch Schaefer, the character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 1987 sci-fi/action flick. Dutch begins with nothing but his fists, but can pick up a machine gun, a laser rifle, and grenades as he runs, jumps across chasms, avoids rolling boulders, and otherwise makes his way through a scorpion- and guerilla-infested South American jungle. He can also acquire different types of bullets, including boomerang, continuous, shotgun, and reaction. Depending on which caves players enter, the action consists of 20–30 levels, with Predator himself showing up infrequently.

Prince of Persia

PUBLISHER: Virgin. DEVELOPER: Movietime. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

A scaled down port of Jordan Mechner's popular computer game (which Broderbund released in 1989), *Prince of Persia* puts players in the role of a young adventurer who has been thrown into a dungeon by the evil and traitorous Jaffar, Grand Vizier to the Sultan of Persia. The nicely animated hero has escaped his cell, but he must brave 12 levels of the obstacle-filled (spikes, chasms, slicers, poisonous potions, moving platforms, multi-story falls) dungeon to rescue the proverbial princess, and he's only got an hour in which to do it. Gameplay consists of the following: running from room to room; executing tricky jumps; climbing up and down ledges; sword-fighting against dungeon guards; stepping on pressure plates to open exit doors and open and close gates; and more. When players go from one room to the next, the screen briefly goes black, and the player suddenly appears in the next room. However, unlike other versions, the NES game scrolls just a little to the right and left. Also released for

the Genesis, SNES, and numerous other systems.

Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. First-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

Princess Tomato has been kidnapped by the evil Minister Pumpkin, and it is up to Sir Cucumber, a Knight of the Realm, to rescue her, restore King Broccoli to the throne, and bring peace to the formerly blissful Salad Kingdom. The fanciful setting of the game will appeal to younger, *Veggie Tales*-era gamers while the old-school formula (read text, click on commands to interact with surroundings, view static imagery) will resonate with those who recall the early days of personal computer adventure games. There are 14 commands from which to choose: move, look, check, talk, take, use, give, buy, hit, fight, praise, dump, item, and Percy. Battles take the form of “finger wars,” which are basically games of rock-paper-scissors. The trial-and-error gameplay of *Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom* can get tedious, but the unusual (for this genre), semi-charming theme does set it apart from the proverbial pack.

Pro Sport Hockey

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Sports/Hockey, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

Viewed from an overhead perspective (the hockey rink scrolls vertically), *Pro Sport Hockey* lets gamers select from 24 teams comprised of 288 NHLPA players, each rated according to speed, shot speed, quickness, defense, and power. There are three modes of arcade-like play: Super Cup (a seven-game series), Exhibition, and Training. On offense, players can aim the puck, but if the goal is in sight, the puck will automatically travel toward the goal no matter what direction the player is facing. Holding the button down creates a more powerful shot. On defense, players can check, stick check, and select auto or manual goalie control. Several features can be turned on or off, including offsides, overtime, icing, and penalties,

the latter of which consists of hooking, tripping, elbowing, and charging. The SNES version has a Season mode and better graphics and sound effects, but both lack crowd noise.

Pro Wrestling

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Pro Wrestling offers enjoyably simple gameplay and nice visual detail, including a referee, a cameraman, and an animated crowd. There are six selectable wrestlers (including a judo expert and a football star), each capable of such outrageous wrestling techniques as The Amazon’s piranha bite, Fighter Hyabusa’s back brain kick, and Kin Corn Karn’s Mongolian chop. Players engage in a series of five-minute matches, culminating in a fight against the mysterious Great Puma, a.k.a. “the perfect wrestler.” Throws, top-of-the-ring jumps, and fighting outside the ring are all part of the fun. Simultaneous action offers two-out-of-three fall matches with no time limit.

Punch-Out!!

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Sports/Boxing, 1 player. 1992.

Punch-Out!! is the same game as *Mike Tyson’s Punch-Out!!*, but a character named Mr. Dream replaces the troublemaking Tyson (now a convicted felon), whose contract with Nintendo had mercifully expired. Followed by: *Super Punch-Out!!* (SNES).

The Punisher

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

In *The Punisher*, players maneuver Marvel Comics’ skull-chested vigilante (who is viewed from behind) left and right along the bottom of an automatically scrolling playfield (which moves left to right), aiming a cursor around the screen while shooting at thugs, hoods, felons, and other targets, including background objects and such comic book criminals as Hitman (who flies around in a helicopter) and the Kingpin (who must be defeated in hand-to-hand combat). The Punisher is armed with an

automatic machine pistol and grenades and can pick up an automatic assault rifle, a rocket launcher, and a Kevlar vest. The action takes place in the streets of New York City, and Punisher can take alternate routes by entering the subway, manholes, and doorways. The Punisher and the cursor move in unison, making for an awkward control scheme, but holding in the A button while pressing the control pad does give the cursor independent movement.

Puss N Boots: Pero's Great Adventure

PUBLISHER: Electro Brain. DEVELOPER: Shouei System. Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Sent back through time and across the world by Count Gruemon, Pero (a.k.a. Puss N Boots), who committed the Cat Kingdom crime of befriending a mouse, must locate and defeat Grueman and the mad Dr. Gari-gari and use their time machine to get home. Much of the game plays like a traditional platformer, with Pero running, jumping, and battling (with a pistol, bombs, and a boomerang) his way through The [Old] West, London, and New York. However, four of the game's seven stages (The Ocean, Arabia, Space Wars, and Liberty) put Pero at the helm of a vehicle, such as a submarine, a car, an airplane, or a hot air balloon, firing missiles, a machine gun, and/or torpedoes. Enemies and obstacles include barrels, shooting stars, sharks, pirate ships, buzzards, jellyfish, airplanes, and more. The jumping controls could use a little polish, but this is a solid (if short) game. Similar to: *Felix the Cat*.

Puzzle

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Idea-Tek. Jigsaw Puzzle, 1 player. 1990.

Puzzle is similar in concept to those plastic handheld games where the user slides little tiles in place to form a picture. There are 10 different images in this video version, beginning with a tiger and progressing to more advanced designs. After the player selects a puzzle, the computer scrambles the picture randomly, and the player must reassemble it. For assistance, players can view the completed picture (up to

five times) or challenge the computer to a game of rock-paper-scissors. The latter subtracts 60 seconds, but lets winners exchange any two pieces on the board. Unlicensed.

Puzznic

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1990.

A solid adaptation of Taito's 1989 arcade game (which was a possible inspiration for *Tetris Attack*), *Puzznic* has players guiding a cursor around the screen, using said cursor to move blocks of varying colors and designs (such as diamonds, spheres, pyramids, and plusses). Blocks are moved horizontally, but go downward when positioned above an empty space. Elevators make blocks go up. The objective is to clear the screen by getting matching blocks to touch. The cartridge also contains *Gravnic*, in which players move all the shapes simultaneously by shifting their gravity. Also released for the PlayStation.

Pyramid

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Thin Chen Enterprise. Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1990.

In *Pyramid*, players must rotate and strategically fit together stones that fall down the screen (one at a time), trying to form solid lines to make the stones disappear. There are five stone types of varying shapes and sizes, each of which contains some component(s) of a triangle and/or a square. Completing two lines simultaneously rewards players with a bomb, which is useful when the screen gets crowded. If the stones pile to the top, the game will end. *Pyramid* plays a lot like *Tetris*, but the shapes are more angular, making it a tougher game. Unlicensed.

Q*bert

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

By the time *Q*bert* hit the NES, the simple four-way control and non-scrolling playfield seemed outdated. However, the game was still fun, with players hopping a round, orange,

hose-nosed creature on the blocks of a pyramid. Jumping on a block changes its color, and Q*bert must hop on every block (thereby making all the block colors the same) to progress to the next pyramid. Later levels force players to change the color of each square twice. While Q*bert does his job, Ugg, Wrong-Way, Coily the snake, and Slick and Sam (who change squares back to their original color) get in the way. Hopping off the pyramid is lethal unless it's on to a disc that transports Q*bert to the top of the pyramid. The original arcade version (Gottlieb, 1982) has crisper graphics and better controls, but the NES game does offer two differ-

ent control schemes, both of which work reasonably well. Also released for the ColecoVision, Game Boy Color, and various other systems, Q*bert spawned a PlayStation remake and two sequels: *Q*bert's Qubes* (arcade, Atari 2600, ColecoVision) and *Q*bert 3* (SNES).

Qix

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Novotrade. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

In *Qix*, players use a diamond-shaped marker to draw lines. As players draw, filling in the screen with boxes, rectangles, and other straight-line shapes, enemies in the form of Qix (an undulating, fan-shaped computer virus), Spritz (star-shaped objects), and Sparx make things difficult. Players should make sure the Qix and the Spritz don't touch the Stix (the line being drawn) and that the Qix, Spritz, and Sparx don't touch the marker. If players stop in mid-draw, a fuse can burn up the Stix, destroying the marker. The objective is to fill in 75 percent or more of the screen. During each game, players can draw fast and slow, the latter garnering more points for each percentage point completed. Trapping the Qix and Spritz while filling in space also scores extra points. Based on Taito's 1981 arcade game, the NES version of *Qix* added a computer virus storyline, textured designs, and the aforementioned Spritz. Also released for the Atari 5200, Atari Lynx, and Game Boy. Sequels include: *Qix II* (arcade), *Super Qix* (arcade), *Ultimate Qix* (Genesis), and *Qix Neo* (PlayStation).

Quattro Adventure

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Multi-Game Compilation/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Quattro Adventure collects four previously unreleased games in one cartridge. Linus Spacehead finds a caped alien adventurer floating on bubbles to avoid rocks and sea creatures, running on a beach while avoiding falling coconuts, and more. In *Super Robin Hood*,



Six coin-op classics ported to the NES: *Q*bert*, *Bump 'n' Jump*, *Galaga* (which was subtitled "Demons of Death"), *Joust*, *Xevious*, and *Spy Hunter*. Most of these games were released for previous systems, such as the Atari 2600 and the ColecoVision, but the more powerful NES was better able to mimic the arcade experience.

the mythical anti-hero collects treasures and keys, climbs ladders, jumps on moving platforms, shoots arrows at bats and other enemies, and more. The titular boy in Boomerang Kid collects (but doesn't throw) boomerangs while performing such activities as jumping on platforms (cliffs, trees, and the like) and avoiding snakes and koalas. In Treasure Island Dizzy, the egg-shaped star of *The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy* explores a tree house village, gold mines, a dragon's lair, and other areas while using items and encountering wizards, trolls, leprechauns, and other strange creatures. All four games are mediocre at best, and only Super Robin Hood gives players a weapon. Unlicensed.

Quattro Adventure (Aladdin Version)

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Multi-Game Compilation/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

The Aladdin rendition of *Quattro Adventure* looks and plays like the standard version, but was produced in a compact cartridge format. Requires the Aladdin Deck Enhancer. Unlicensed.

Quattro Arcade

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Multi-Game Compilation, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Quattro Arcade consists of four previously unreleased, highly playable games. F-16 Renegade is a vertically scrolling shooter in which players fly over forests, deserts, and an arctic wasteland, firing bullets and bombs at tanks and planes, the latter of which move in patterns and release power-ups. Certain levels offer a third-person, behind-the-plane perspective. C.J.'s Elephant Antics is a cute side-scrolling platformer in which C.J. runs, jumps (over spikes and on moving platforms), throws bouncing bombs, and shoots peanuts through his trunk at such enemies as freaky frogs and savage snowmen. In Go! Dizzy Go!, the egg-shaped Dizzy and his pal Denzil maneuver around a series of themed mazes (Underwater, Forest, Pyramid, Mountain, and Castle), collecting fruits and power-ups (shields, smart

bombs, the ability to move blocks) while avoiding enemies. Stunt Buggies is an overhead-view, Rally-X-style racer in which players drive around mazes, collecting bombs and avoiding or blowing smoke on a wacky assortment of enemy vehicles. Unlicensed.

Quattro Sports

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Sports/Multi-Game Compilation, 1-3 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Quattro Sports features four graphically challenged (actually, Baseball Pros looks decent) titles in one cartridge. The best game in the bunch, Baseball Pros is playable, but does have some flaws, such as regulation games lasting 10 innings and the apparent lack of a short-stop. Viewed from overhead, Soccer Simulation features throw-ins, penalties, and fouls, but moves much faster than the real sport. Played on three different court surfaces (grass, clay, and gravel), Pro Tennis features lobs, smashes, volleys, and other hits, but serving the ball in bounds can be tough. Similar to (but nowhere near as good as) *Ivan "Ironman" Stewart's Super Off Road*, BMX Simulator offers 15 different tracks across three types of terrain: Dirt Biking, Desert Riding, and Quarry Racing. Unlicensed.

Quattro Sports (Aladdin Version)

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Sports/Multi-Game Compilation, 1-3 players (simultaneous). 1993.

The Aladdin rendition of *Quattro Sports* looks and plays like the standard version, but was produced in a compact cartridge format. Requires the Aladdin Deck Enhancer. Unlicensed.

Race America

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Sports Car Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Race America is an unusual game. It features the typical behind-the-car perspective of such racers as *Pole Position* and *Rad Racer*, but the lead car gets a larger view of the action (the trailing car is shown in a small window at the

bottom). In addition, when the racer closes the gap on an opponent during a cross country race (the course runs from Boston to Los Angeles, with eight cities in between), the view switches to overhead. There's side-view, split-screen drag racing as well, in which players must focus on acceleration, speed, shifting gears, RPMs, oil slicks, and the opponent's car.

Racket Attack

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Sports/Tennis, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

One of the more entertainingly realistic sports sims for the NES, *Racket Attack* offers the following features: 16 playable characters (eight males and eight females, each nicely drawn); three courts (hard, clay, and grass); a surprisingly articulate announcer calling out scores; and three types of serves (spin, slice, and straight). Standard hits include lob, volley, smash, slice, forehand, and backhand. The manual recommends that gamers keep track of their own tournaments (meaning there's not an actual tournament mode), but the game does offer a password-backed, seven-match competition against the computer. As in most tennis video games, the perspective is from an elevated viewpoint behind the court.



NES sports car games *Rad Racer* and *Rad Racer II*, both developed by Square.

Rad Racer

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Square. Sports Car Racing, 1 player. 1987.

Although it owes more than a passing nod to *Out Run*, this early title from Square is a fine game in its own right. After selecting one of two cars (a 328 Twin Turbo or an F1 Machine), players begin racing on the first of eight different twisting, turning, timed courses, including a run through the Rocky Mountains, a stretch in Athens, Greece, and a spectacular looking night drive toward the San Francisco skyline. With each successive course, a new enemy car is added, such as a Corvette or a Mercedes Benz. Bumping into other cars is allowable, but dangerous since getting bumped into roadside trees and signs is a common occurrence, especially during turns. The view is from behind the player's car, which moves at an immensely satisfying, turbo-enhanced maximum speed of 255kmph. Like *3-D WorldRunner*, *Rad Racer* was originally packaged with a cheaply produced pair of 3D glasses, though *WorldRunner* uses the 3D effect to much better, um, effect.

Rad Racer II

PUBLISHER: Square. DEVELOPER: Square. Sports Car Racing, 1 player. 1990.

Viewed from behind the player's car, *Rad Racer II* is a lot like the original *Rad Racer*, letting gamers speed down eight twisting, turning, timed tracks (including Big Apple, Las Vegas Blvd., and Bay Bridge), each of which sports dazzlingly detailed backgrounds. Players can select from two different songs (compared to three in the original game), and there's only one car available this time around. In addition, 3D is no longer an option, helping create an unusual case where the sequel has fewer features than the original. One new component is a turbo boost ignition, which lets players send their car into an immediate power start. Another thing *Rad Racer* veterans will notice is

that *Rad Racer II* is a tougher game, allowing very little room for error.

Rad Racket-Deluxe Tennis II

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment.
DEVELOPER: Idea-Tek. Sports/Tennis, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Rad Racket is a typical tennis video game, but for one odd distinction. From time to time, a rat will appear on the court, to which the sideline referee will exclaim (via text bubble), “Yuk a rat.” If a player manages to hit the rat with the ball, he or she will automatically win the round. Otherwise, standard rules apply (at least for the most part). Gamers can select from three court surfaces (grass, clay, and hard) and from six characters, each of whom is supposedly an expert in one area, such as the smash or the short ball. The controls are simple, and the elevated viewpoint is from behind one end of the court (as in *Racket Attack* and numerous other tennis games). Despite the “II” in the title, there is no evidence of a precursor to the game. Unlicensed.

Raid on Bungeling Bay

PUBLISHER: Broderbund Software. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Adapted from the Commodore 64 computer classic (1984), which was *SimCity* creator Will Wright’s first game, *Raid on Bungeling Bay* has players flying a helicopter (which is equipped with a machine gun and bombs) over islands controlled by the evil Bungeling Empire. The scrolling playfield is 100 contiguous screens in size, and players must locate and destroy six secret weapons factories, making sure to land for repairs and protect aircraft carriers. Enemy defenses, such as bombers, fighters, missiles, tanks, and battleships, will attempt to shoot the helicopter down. A second player can control enemy gun turrets.

Raid 2020

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Widely regarded as one of the worst titles in the NES library, *Raid 2020* deserves its du-

bious reputation, thanks to poor controls, buggy programming, limited animation, and lame graphics. Armed with a gun, players, as an undercover narcotics officer named Shadow, must traverse six stages (Pier, Streets of Technopolis, Warehouse, Swamp, Space, and Computer Center), dodging mines and bird droppings (!), entering doorways, seizing cocaine and cash, and shooting drug kingpin Pitbull’s army of robots and brainwashed servants. Pressing up and down moves Shadow diagonally, and certain levels must be repeated if all the bad guys aren’t killed, even though all the enemies don’t appear onscreen the first time through (leading to certain frustration). Shadow can jump and grab weapon power-ups, and he pilots a boat and a spaceship in certain areas, but these flourishes hardly make the game worth playing. Unlicensed.

Rainbow Islands

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Vertical Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

A nice port of Taito’s 1987 coin-op classic, *Rainbow Islands: The Story of Bubble Bobble 2*, which was the arcade sequel to *Bubble Bobble* (as opposed to the NES sequel, which was *Bubble Bobble Part 2*), *Rainbow Islands* for the NES is a nice entry in an unusual genre: the vertical scrolling platformer. Players guide a boy named Bubby as he makes his way up four stages in each of seven different worlds. Bubby can jump up to platforms, but is better known for his ability to create small, solid rainbows that he can use as walkways (to reach platforms above and below) and as weapons to knock bats, bugs, tanks, baby Frankenstein monsters, and other enemies off the screen. Grabbing magical items (stars, potions, and the like) gives Bubby special powers, such as double rainbows, lightning bolts, and extra speed. The NES game is missing the world map and is less colorful than the arcade original, but it’s a great game nevertheless. Also released for the PlayStation (via *Bubble Bobble: Also Featuring Rainbow Islands*). Followed by: *Parasol Stars: The Story of Bubble Bobble III* (Turbografx-16), *Rainbow Islands: Evolution* (PSP), and *Rainbow Islands: Revolution* (Nintendo DS).

Rally Bike

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Romstar.
Motorcycle Racing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

Viewed from overhead (ala *Spy Hunter*), *Rally Bike* has players racing a motorcycle up streets, trails, and other pathways (including a boat dock), dodging such obstacles as trucks, trains, buildings, and trees while trying to pass other racers or make them crash. Placing in the top 10 of a race lets gamers upgrade their bike's engine and tires, including rain tires (for extra grip), block tires (for off-road driving), and slicks (for high speeds on highways). Helicopters frequently drop off such helpful items as hi-grade gasoline, invincibility, turbochargers (temporary speed boosts), and helper motorcycles (which crash other racers without hurting themselves or the player). It is sometimes necessary to pull over and refuel. Unlike the superior arcade original (Taito, 1988), the comparatively primitive looking NES port makes players start from the beginning of the level after a crash.

Rambo

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Pack-In Video. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

Loosely based on the feature film *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), *Rambo* is a convoluted, poorly programmed game. In addition to battling the expected commandos, soldiers, and officers, Rambo, who looks like an overstuffed karate kid in tights, must take on birds, spiders, cobras, panthers, and other animals. Rambo begins the game armed with a combat knife, but can add exploding arrows, hand grenades, throwing knives, and a machine gun to his arsenal. Despite formidable firepower, the game deviates from straightforward action by having Rambo talk with people to garner clues and stand on top of N and S ground markers to transfer from one location to another. It's easy to get lost, so drawing a map is recommended. Sluggish controls and poor animation add to the monotony. Oddly enough, the game is somewhat similar to *Zelda II* (at least in basic design).

Rampage

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East.
Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Based on the slow and redundant (yet visceral) Bally/Midway arcade game (1986), *Rampage* for the NES lacks the three-player action of the original (Ralph the Wolf is absent), and the graphics suffer from slowdown and chop-piness when the screen gets busy. However, the action remains roughly the same. Players control giant monsters George the Ape or Lizzie the Lizard as they climb and punch buildings, smash bridges, eat food (including people!), and destroy helicopters, trucks, soldiers, and more. Certain items, such as lightning, should be avoided. The reign of destruction takes place in 128 cities. When compared to the Atari 7800 version, the NES game has more detailed graphics, but the 7800 game includes Ralph the Wolf (as does the Sega Master System version). Followed by: *Rampage World Tour* (multiple), *Rampage Through Time* (PlayStation), *Rampage Puzzle Attack* (Game Boy Advance), and other sequels and offshoots.

Ramport

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Strategy/Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Viewed from overhead and set during the Middle Ages, *Ramport* is a complex, unusual, highly entertaining game. After selecting a territory and choosing a castle to defend, players engage in three primary activities: strategically placing their cannons (the closer a cannon is to the harbor containing enemy ships, the better); guiding a gunsight over enemy gunships, troopships, and flagships while firing cannons (the more cannons the player has, the faster he or she can shoot); and using rotateable wall segments (some of which look like *Tetris* puzzle pieces) to fill in holes in castle walls and to build new castle walls. In order to continue to the next battle, players must surround at least one castle with walls. Based on Atari's 1990 arcade game, which benefited from trackball control, a three-player mode, and higher resolution graphics. Also released for the Game Boy, Game Boy Color, Atari Lynx, SNES, and Genesis.

R.B.I. Baseball

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Namco.
Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1987.

Licensed by the MLBPA, *R.B.I. Baseball* was one of the first baseball games to incorporate actual player names, meaning Mark McGwire, George Brett, Jose Canseco, and numerous other figures of the era are featured (unfortunately, they are short, fat, and have cartoonishly large heads). Eight teams are available (represented by city names, sans mascots), plus a pair of all-star squads. Position players vary according to hitting ability, power, and base-running speed while pitchers vary according to stamina, pitching speed, and ball control. Pinch hitters are available as needed. Player stats don't change from game to game, it's too easy to hit home runs and steal bases, and players can't jump or dive, but *R.B.I. Baseball* is both playable and historically significant. A licensed and unlicensed version of this game was released.

R.B.I. Baseball 2

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen.
Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1990.

As in the original *R.B.I. Baseball*, the viewpoint of *R.B.I. Baseball 2* during pitches is from behind the batter, with a pair of windows showing first and third base. Once the ball is hit into play, gamers get a larger view of the field. However, numerous improvements and additions to the formula have been made, including talking umpires, instant replays, jumping and diving (including sliding head-first), the ability to turn the music off, better looking players (realism has replaced super-deformed), and many more players. There are now 26 teams, each with a 24-man roster. Once again, actual player names are included (thanks to MLBPA licensing), but pro team names are absent (thanks to the lack of MLB licensing). Player stats reflect the 1989 Major League Baseball season. Unlicensed.

R.B.I. Baseball 3

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen.
Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1991.

Like *R.B.I. Baseball 2*, *R.B.I. Baseball 3* features all 26 Major League teams of the era (represented by city names, but not team names), each fielding 24 professional players, including such stars as Wade Boggs, Roger Clemens, Barry Bonds, and Nolan Ryan. Stats have been updated to reflect the 1990 season, and 28 new teams have been added: all the Division Champions from the 1983–1989 seasons. Other options and features include instant replays, bunting, stealing, squeeze plays, substitutions, switch hitting, pick-offs, and six types of pitches: knuckleball, sinkerball, fastball, curveball left, curveball right, and normal speed. Also released for the *Genesis* (but with a fatal flaw — the computer swings at every outside pitch). Followed by: *R.B.I. Baseball 4* (*Genesis*), *R.B.I. Baseball '93* (*Genesis*), *R.B.I. Baseball '94* (*Genesis*, *Game Gear*), *R.B.I. Baseball '95* (*Sega 32X*), and *Super R.B.I. Baseball* (*SNES*). Unlicensed.

R.C. Pro-Am

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Rare.
Miniature/Radio Control Racing/Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1988.

Viewed from an isometric/overhead perspective, *R.C. Pro-Am* wasn't the first combat racing game, but its emphasis on bombing and shooting missiles at other cars did influence such titles as *Super Mario Kart* and *Rock 'n Roll Racing*. Players race against three computer-controlled cars around twisting, turning tracks, avoiding such road hazards as water puddles, oil slicks, skulls, and pop-up walls while running over such upgrades as higher top speed, turbo acceleration, roll cages, and sticky tires. Grabbing letters spelling out NINTENDO earns players a faster car. Based on Rare's 1987 arcade game.

R.C. Pro-Am II

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare.
Miniature/Radio Control Racing/Demolition/Combat Racing, 1–4 players (simultaneous).
1992.

By adding truck-pull and drag racing mini-games, more elaborate tracks, multi-

player action, and the ability to purchase weapons, tire upgrades, motor upgrades, oil slicks, and other items, *R.C. Pro-Am II* improves upon the formula pioneered by the already enjoyable *R.C. Pro-Am*. Unfortunately, it didn't sell as well as the original (thanks to the success of the Genesis and SNES, which had overtaken the NES in popularity), making it a harder game to find. Multi-tap adapter compatible. Followed by: *Super R.C. Pro-Am* (Game Boy) and *Championship Pro-Am* (Genesis).

Remote Control

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: RSP. Game Show, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on MTV's first game show, which more or less began the decline of the formerly great music channel, *Remote Control* has three players (including up to two human contestants) competing to answer questions about classic TV shows, rock stars, celebrities, and other pop cultural touchstones. The first player to buzz in gets to answer the question, but the multiple choice format makes the game way too easy. Unlike the TV show, the video game has no bonus rounds (though it does have a fast round), and the host's annoying remarks quickly become repetitive.

The Ren & Stimpy Show: Buckeroo\$!

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Based on the Nickelodeon cartoon series (which was simply called *The Ren and Stimpy Show*), *Buckeroo\$!* is divided into three distinctive areas. In Space Madness, players control the hairball-spitting Stimpy as he guides Ren (who wanders *Lemmings*-like) to sick bay, dodging or defeating space rats, alien monsters, robots, and space cabbages along the way. Helpful items include direction-reversing litter boxes, a hole-cutting beaver, and sta-put socks. In Out West, Ren and Stimpy work their way through town, past the corrals, and on to the stables, where they aim to steal the sheriff's horse. Cowhands, buzzards, trough-sharks, snakes, and bandits make this task difficult. Fi-

nally, Robin Hoëk of Logwood finds Ren, armed with bow and turkey baster, making his way through the village and to the castle to rescue Maid Moron from the clutches of the evil sheriff of Dodge City. Also released for the SNES.

Renegade

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Renegade for the NES is a fairly entertaining (if shallow) brawler, but it isn't as good as Taito's original arcade game (1986), which had better graphics, three-button control, and smarter enemy A.I. It does feature a couple of flourishes not found in the original, including a fun side-scrolling motorcycle stage where players speed down a highway, battling other bikers. The basic punch-and-kick gameplay is similar to *Double Dragon* (sans weaponry), but with an unusual control system: The A button attacks enemies (including hoods, street punks, and kung fu women) to the left while the B button attacks to the right. Moves include running punches, running kicks, sit-on punches, shoulder throws, and kneeling. Followed by: *Target: Renegade* (NES).

Rescue: The Embassy Mission

PUBLISHER: Kemco/Seika. DEVELOPER: Info-graphics. Tactical Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

A forerunner to such games as the multiplatform *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*, *Rescue: The Embassy Mission* has players rescuing innocents taken hostage by political fanatics (in the original 1988 computer version, which was called *Hostages: Rescue Mission*, the enemies were referred to as terrorists). The game is divided into sections, with players performing the following tasks: walking along avoiding spotlights and ducking into doorways (side-scrolling); taking sniper shots at windows of a building (viewed from behind the shooter, who is positioned across the street from the building); repelling down and breaking into said building (third-person); and walking through the building, blowing away enemies (first-per-

son shooter style). Though terribly short, *Rescue: The Embassy Mission* was clearly ahead of its time, offering high production values and a compelling tactical experience.

Ring King

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Namco.
Sports/Boxing, 1–8 players (2-player simultaneous). 1987.

The Data East Championship Title is up for grabs in *Ring King*, which includes six modes of play: Watch 1; Watch 2; Training (where players earn punch, speed, and stamina power points); 2-Player VS (five five-round fights between two boxers); Ranking (battle ranked boxers in rookie, U.S., and world divisions); and Tournament. Cartoonish, big-headed boxers fight one another using jabs, body blows, hooks, and uppercuts. Boxers with a high number of power points can execute spin hooks, strong jabs, flying uppercuts, and super flying uppercuts. The elevated view of the game is from the side, with the screen scrolling left and right a bit as the boxers dance around the ring (which is shown at a slight angle). Based on the 1985 Data East coin-op classic, which spawned a 1986 sequel: *Ring King II* (arcade).

River City Ransom

PUBLISHER: American Technos. DEVELOPER: Technos. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

One of the more enjoyable games in the NES library, *River City Ransom* is a *Double Dragon*-style beat-'em-up, but with cartoonish graphics and a bit more substance. Players guide high school kids Alex and Ryan through malls, high schools, parks, factories, and other city locations, punching, kicking, and using weapons (tires, brass knuckles, lead pipes, sticks, chains, trash cans, crates, and rocks) against nine different gangs, who bring humor to the action with such exclamations as “Barf!” and “Is this fun?” Defeating gang members and bosses earns cash to purchase food, new fighting moves, stamina, and agility. Includes pass-word feature.

Road Runner

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

The classic Warner Bros. cartoon comes to interactive life with *Road Runner* for the NES. Players control the titular speedster as he runs down twisting, turning highways, jumping over cliffs, avoiding obstacles (boulders, oncoming trucks, cannon balls, and sand traps), and trying to avoid capture by Wile E. Coyote. Road Runner is faster than his nemesis, but Wile E. can put the odds in his favor with a helicopter, a pogo stick, jet skates, and dynamite. To maintain his trademark speed, Road Runner should run over birdseed along the way. Like its coin-op counterpart (Atari, 1985), *Road Runner* has players running from right to left, which is a change of pace from the more standardized left to right movement found in most side-scrollers. *Road Runner* is simplistic and not as funny as the cartoon, but players must constantly keep on their toes to avoid Wile E, making for a fun game. Such classical tunes as *Flight of the Bumblebee* and the *William Tell Overture* complement the action. Also released for the Atari 2600. Unlicensed.

RoadBlasters

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1990.

A cross of sorts between *Spy Hunter* and *Pole Position*, *RoadBlasters* has players racing a futuristic car down the twisting, turning streets of Bubble City, Desert Region, Sunset Strip, and other areas, avoiding mines and toxic spills while shooting cars, jeeps, motorcycles, and gun turrets. Players should also avoid or shoot command cars, which are only vulnerable to special weapons players acquire by catching packs dropped by a support jet. Special weapons include u.z. cannon (rapid fire), electro shield (invulnerability), and cruise missiles. There are speed boosts as well. Unlike *Spy Hunter* and *Pole Position*, *RoadBlasters* places a heavy emphasis on fuel, which is gathered by reaching checkpoints and by running over globes. The fuel factor made Atari's 1986 arcade original (which benefited from digitized voice effects,

vastly superior graphics, and a sit-down cabinet with steering wheel) suck up lots of quarters, so it's nice to continue for free on the highly playable NES version. Also released for the Genesis and Atari Lynx.

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves

PUBLISHER: Virgin Games. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

Loosely based on the 1991 Kevin Costner movie of the same name (the storyline remains relatively true, but the characters don't look like their feature film counterparts, not even in close-up), *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* is an action-oriented RPG with side-view sword fights (against the likes of Little John, a prison guard, and the Sheriff of Nottingham), overhead melee battles (in which Robin is joined by Azeem, Duncan, and Friar Tuck), and obstacle-ridden horse chases. Players must also break out of jail, talk to characters, equip weapons (daggers, knives, and the like) and armor, earn experience points, select actions from text menus (talk, look, take, search, etc.), find keys to open doors, walk around scrolling dungeons while battling enemies, and much more. Unlike most RPGs, *Prince of Thieves* lacks a save feature (though there are three continues), meaning the game must be beaten in a single session.

RoboCop

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

RoboCop puts players in the role of the titular cyborg, armed with an Auto-9 handgun (which can fire diagonally and straight) and the ability to punch bad guys, block punches, and walk up and down stairs. As things progress, the slowly ambling RoboCop can grab a machine gun and a cobra gun for fighting crime in six different locations: Old Detroit, City Hall, Warehouse, O.C.P. Headquarters, Steelworks, and Boardroom. Cool cut scenes and nicely programmed music help capture the spirit of the popular film (1987), but the controls could use some work. The original arcade game (Data East, 1988) had digitized voice effects and vastly superior graphics.

RoboCop 2

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

Unlike the original *RoboCop* (NES, arcade), *RoboCop 2* includes jumping, which is kind of odd considering the heavy, laborious movements inherent to the movie version of the titular cyborg super cop. The manual expounds upon this, saying that, due to his massive weight, RoboCop “can't stop on a dime,” meaning that landing controls are kind of slippery (an annoyance for sure). In addition to jumping and walking, RoboCop can kneel, punch, shoot bad guys (weapon pick-ups include t-shot, 3-way, super, and armor-piercing bullets), grab invincibility capsules, avoid magnets and lasers, ride on jet propulsion platforms, and participate in first-person target shooting contests (ala *Hogan's Alley*). Loosely based on the feature film (1990), but not so much on the arcade game (Data East, 1991), which has eight-way movement (as opposed to the simple left-to-right action of the NES version).

RoboCop 3

PUBLISHER: Ocean Software. DEVELOPER: Ocean Software. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

In *RoboCop 3*, the titular cyborg must run, jump, duck, fire a large-bore cannon (diagonally and straight), and even fly (via gyropack) his way through five levels of Old Detroit, including the Rocket Motors factory and the OCP Tower. Enemies to battle include tanks, ED 209s, heavy artillery, and robot ninjas, among others. Throughout the game, RoboCop can repair damaged parts of his body (which hinder movement), and he can fire homing missiles and smart bombs. Obstacles to negotiate include rickety floors, potholes, conveyor belts, tank shells, and more. RoboCop's objective is to defeat the Rehab Officers, who are kicking families out of their homes in preparation for the construction of Delta City. Loosely based on the 1992 feature film. Also released for the SNES and Genesis.

Robodemons

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

In *Robodemons*, players must run, jump, and sometimes fly (via booster rockets) through the fiery depths of Hades, shooting demons with a magical boomerang, freeing souls condemned by the evil Demon King Kull, and ultimately destroying the machine Kull uses to inject demon souls into his mechanical warriors. There are seven levels of play: Bone, Flesh, Fire, Condemned Souls, Demon's Quarters, Robodemon Factor, and Kull's Palace, each with a different theme and enemy type. For example, Bone contains graveyards, skeletons, crossbones, and skulls. There are keys to grab for opening certain doors and a boss guarding the exit to each level. Like most Color Dreams cartridges, *Robodemons* is a Z-grade title, suffering from poor animation, sluggish controls, and repetitious gameplay and music. Surprisingly, there are digitized voice effects. Unlicensed.

RoboWarrior

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Maze, 1 player. 1988.

RoboWarrior is somewhat similar to the overhead view action of *Bomberman*, but harder and more complex. Players guide a cyborg through an apocalyptic world, blowing up obstacles (trees, rocks, blocks, statues, and the like) with bombs while shooting beams at aliens, robotic spiders, mechanical birds, and other enemies. Bombs uncover special powers, including candles, missiles, clocks (for freezing time), super boots (for speed), and more. Grabbing power balls extends the length of the beams. Setting a bomb and failing to get out of the way will be a common occurrence for many, but skilled gamers will enjoy the steep challenges of *RoboWarrior*.

Rock 'n' Ball

PUBLISHER: NTVIC. DEVELOPER: VAP. Pinball, 1-4 players (4-player alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1990.

This versatile and entertaining cartridge includes a standard pinball table, plus six un-

usual games that expand the concept of what pinball can be. Soccer and Hockey has each player controlling one flipper from opposite sides of the playfield, trying to get the ball into the opponent's net. Nineball is a betting game in which players must arrange the pinballs in Bingo-esque formations. Finally, there are three Battle Flipper games (Bomber, Thunder, and Attack), each of which has players positioned on opposite sides of the table, shooting for targets and the other player's pockets. There are six playable characters, each of whom has different flippers and/or flipper skills (small, large, weak, hard hitting, and the like).

Rocket Ranger

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: KEMCO. Adventure/Third-Person Shooter/Fighting, 1 player. 1990.

Based on Cinemaware's 1988 computer game, *Rocket Ranger* tries (and succeeds on a small level) to recreate the fun and excitement of the old Saturday matinee movie serials, such as *Flash Gordon* and *King of the Rocket Men*. In the year 1990, aliens invade Earth, and it is up to the Rocket Ranger and his trusty flying suit to save the day. Strategy is required in sending out spies to various countries and gathering parts of a rocket ship, but the action scenes are more basic. During the shooting scenarios, players view the action from behind the hero (ala *Space Harrier*) while moving in all directions around the screen, firing away at alien gunners, air torpedoes, a zeppelin, and other targets. In the one-on-one fighting portions, both combatants stand in place while gamers unleash jabs and uppercuts at the enemy.

The Rocketeer

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Realtime Associates. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Based on Walt Disney's live action feature (1991), *The Rocketeer* puts players in control of Cliff Secord, owner of the highly coveted rocketpack. Given the ability to run, jump, duck, and fly, Cliff's mission is to rescue his girlfriend, Jenny, from Nazi spy and Hollywood heart throb Neville Sinclair. The action takes place through six chapters (circa 1938), with

Cliff punching, blowing up (with grenades), and shooting (with a pistol, a rifle, a spray gun, and a bazooka) such bad guys as brawlers, grenade throwers, kneeling shooters, and enemy rocketmen. The enemies are redundant, but nice graphics, a sense of adventure (thanks in part to flight), and good controls (Cliff can turn around and switch weapons while ducking) make *The Rocketeer* one of the better 8-bit movie-based titles. It's certainly superior to the much different Super Nintendo game of the same name, which includes deadly dull airplane and first-person shooter sequences.

Rockin' Kats

PUBLISHER: Atlus. DEVELOPER: Atlus. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

In the underappreciated *Rockin' Kats*, players guide a cool cat named Willy on a quest to rescue his girlfriend from Mugsy, a local crime boss. The fightin' feline, who looks dapper in tie and hat, must run, jump, and battle his way through five prohibition-era levels: Downtown Street, Sky Ace, Playland, Western Adventure, and Channel 5 I ♥ New York. Willy is equipped with an unusual attack method: a boxing glove-type weapon that extends accordion-like from his fist. Willy not only uses this punching mechanism to knock out enemies (gangsters, desperados, ace pilots, and the like), but he can also use it as a grappling hook to grab onto platforms, swing in circles, and propel himself to otherwise unreachable areas. Playing bonus mini-games (roulette, pipe toss, and basketball) grants Willy money to purchase bombs, twin balls (every punch shoots out two balls), hammer punch, and jet sneakers (for flying longer and landing slower).

Roger Clemens' MVP Baseball

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Like many baseball video games, this one sports a behind-the-catcher perspective during pitching and hitting. However, when players are fielding, the view is from the field looking in toward home plate, which is a nice change of pace. Other features include: Exhibition

mode, Regular Season mode, diving and jumping for the ball, designated hitters, and curveballs, changeups, and fastballs. In addition, Ask the Rocket lets players get strategic advice from Clemens himself. There are 26 teams, each based on real Major League clubs, but with different (if similar) player and team names. Includes password feature. Also released for the SNES and Genesis.

Rollerball

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Pinball, 1–4 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1990.

Rollerball is a nicely programmed pinball sim that scrolls vertically, giving players four screens worth of playfield. Ball physics are on target (so to speak), the flippers work well, and the table is littered with a nice array of spinners, rebounders, holes, bumpers, letter targets, drop targets, and other staples of the genre. There's even a slot machine to aim for. Hitting the various targets exhibits a wide variety of results, such as opening gates, unlocking a bonus screen, increasing the score multiplier, turning the flippers invisible, or reversing the flippers. Visually, the game is fairly basic (backgrounds consist of a tall building, clouds, and blue skies), but gameplay is spot-on. *Rollerball* also includes a nifty two-player mode in which gamers compete by hitting targets located along the opponent's side of the board.

Rollerblade Racer

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Radiance Software/Designer Software. Sports/Inline Skating, 1 player. 1993.

Viewed from a $\frac{3}{4}$ perspective (ala *Paperboy*), *Rollerblade Racer* has players guiding a kid named Kirk (who is fully decked out in protective gear) up short, repetitious streets, doing tricks and skating around and/or jumping over barrels, dogs, children, manholes, and other obstacles. Players can slow down and speed up, veer right and left, duck to maintain top speed, skate on stairs and sidewalks, and even skate backwards. The objective is to beat the timer in each of the game's five levels, in addition to scoring more than 5000 points total.

Unfortunately, poor programming and problematic controls ruin any potential the game may have had.

RollerGames

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

Despite its licensing connection to the 1989–1990 TV show of the same name, *RollerGames* is not a roller derby title. Rather, it's a *Double Dragon*-style brawler with the unusual distinction of most of the characters—heroes and villains alike—getting around via roller skates. As the T-Birds' Ice Box, the Hot Flash's Rolling Thunder, or the Rockers' California Kid, players skate through six fun, challenging levels (two of which are auto-scrolling), punching and kicking bad guys (including punks, dogs, and helicopters), jumping over gaps, going up ramps, fighting bosses (including Captain Meat Hook and Fish Face), and dodging manholes, rolling barrels, road signs, motorcyclists, and other obstacles. Areas to battle through include: Downtown, The Night Highway, Automobile Processing Plant, The Regional Freeway, The Jungle River, and The V.I.P.E.R.'s Pit, the latter of which is headquarters for the Vicious International Punks and Eternal Renegades.

Rolling Thunder

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Despite skinnier characters, less colorful graphics, and the lack of a two-player alternating mode, *Rolling Thunder* is an excellent port of Namco's 1986 arcade classic. On a mission to rescue the beautiful Leila, the player, as a secret police agent, must run, jump, and climb through treacherous passageways, using a handgun to blow away hooded thugs, ninjas, ape-men, flamers (when hit twice, they break into four and attack), and bats with human faces. Entering specially marked doors grants players bullets and machine guns, and unmarked doors sometimes harbor extra time. The game is action packed, but players must progress carefully (including ducking under enemy fire), making for a substantial challenge.

Includes password feature. Unlicensed. Followed by: *Rolling Thunder 2* (arcade, Genesis) and *Rolling Thunder 3* (Genesis).

Romance of the Three Kingdoms

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1–8 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Set during civil war-torn Second Century China, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* puts players in the role of one of many warlords, trying to unify the 58 states of the country. Gameplay consists primarily of managing numbers, each number representing the statistical attributes of a general or a state. Generals are rated according to such factors as age, health, IQ, weapons, and number of soldiers in their unit while states are rated according to gold in the treasury, rice in the storehouse, vulnerability to disasters, number of castles, land value, number of generals, and the like. Actions include moving men and generals, attacking neighboring states, giving presents to generals, planting fields, building dams, training armies, buying weapons, transporting assets, and much more. Players can select from five scenarios: Chaotic World, The Emergence of Cao, The Opening of a New Age, The Battle of Red Wall, and The Age of the Three Kingdoms. The two main viewpoints are an overhead map and a game board/battlefield made up of squares. Adapted from the groundbreaking 1985 Japanese computer game, *Sangokushi*. Includes battery backup.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms II

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Turn-Based Strategy, 1–12 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms II is similar to part one, but with some improved features, including a better looking, non-scrolling battle map and some new tactical maneuvers, such as planning a joint invasion with another ruler against a third country. Six all-new scenarios are available: Dong Zhuo Seizes Loyang; Rivals Struggle for Power; Aged Liu Bei Hides; Cao Covets Control of China; Nation Breaks into 3 Divisions; and The Three-way Contest.

Patient gamers with a taste for strategic, slowly paced maneuvering will thoroughly enjoy the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* series. Includes battery backup. Also released for the Genesis and SNES. Followed by numerous sequels, including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms III: Dragon of Destiny* (Genesis, SNES) and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV: Wall of Fire* (SNES, Saturn, PlayStation).

Roundball: 2-on-2 Challenge

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Data East. Sports/Basketball, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Like its title indicates, this game lets players engage in a little two-on-two basketball. However, there's also the option to play one-on-one. The elevated "camera" shows the game from behind the three-point line, giving players a nice view of the half-court action. Many of the real rules of basketball are enforced, including three seconds in the key, 24-second shot-clock violation, goal tending, traveling, and out-of-bounds. Players can dribble, shoot (including free throws and randomly selected dunks, hook shots, and lay-ups), pass (including jump passes), rebound, steal, block shots, and enter four pre-set plays (including setting picks and posting up). Options include quarter length, Tournament mode, and eight selectable teams. Stats are displayed after each period, but they don't become part of the players' permanent records. Multi-tap adapter compatible.

Rush'n Attack

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

In *Rush'n Attack*, dozens of American POWs are being held inside a heavily armed base. To free the captives and destroy the base, players must run, jump, climb (up and down ladders), duck (under enemy fire), and battle their way through six short, but super tough stages: Iron Bridge and Missile Base; Airport; Harbor; Forest and Airshed; Warehouse; and Enemy Base. The heroic figure players control is armed with a knife, but he can pick up weapons (bazookas, hand grenades, pistols, and invincibility shields) dropped by wave after

wave of foot soldiers, artillerymen, machine gunners, and other enemies that attack from both sides. Bosses include jumping soldiers, rocket men, attack dogs, autogyros, and parachute troops. Based on Konami's Cold War-era classic, which hit the arcades in 1985.

Rygar

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1987.

A re-imagining of Tecmo's 1986 arcade game, *Rygar* for the NES takes nice advantage of the console format, adding non-linear gameplay and certain RPG elements to the running, jumping, side-scrolling formula. Players guide the titular hero through mountains, towers, and palaces, using his patented grappling hook as a weapon and climbing tool. Rescuing various gods grants Rygar five additional items (wind pulley, crossbow, coat of arms, suit of armor, and flute of Pegasus) while killing certain monsters increases Rygar's spiritual strength (stretched grappling hook, damage to all onscreen enemies, and recovered physical strength). Followed by: *Rygar: The Legendary Adventure* (PS2).

Ryne Sandberg Plays Bases Loaded 3

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Tose. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Endorsed by Chicago Cub Ryne Sandberg, *Bases Loaded 3* drops the lengthy seasonal play of the first two games in the series and substitutes a challenge to play the perfect game (a change that was not for the better). Performances are rated according to 13 categories, and there are now three stadiums from which to choose and a team edit feature. One confounding alteration was the change in fielding perspective. Once the ball is hit into play, home plate appears at the top of the screen (with center field at the bottom), making for an awkward view of the game. Followed by: *Bases Loaded 4* (NES).

S.C.A.T.: Special Cybernetic Attack Team

PUBLISHER: Natsume. DEVELOPER: Natsume. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

One of the best games for the NES, *S.C.A.T.* is characterized by detailed graphics, novel weaponry, smooth difficulty progression, a distinct lack of slowdown, excellent maneuverability (players can shoot forward and behind), and terrific two-player cooperative action. In 2029, Earth is under attack by evil alien Vile Malmart (whose forces include drone blasters, super lasers, missile ships, shock troopers, beam guns, and other enemies), and it is up to Arnold and Sigourney, a pair of warriors who are part human, part machine, to save the day. Twin satellites rotate around each of the hovering heroes (ala *Gradius*), and these can be locked into place for steady aiming. By destroying certain enemies, players can pick up laser fire, wide beam, bombs, energy, and extra speed. Levels to battle through include: New York City Ruins, Subterranean Realm, The Astrotube, The Battleship, and The Orbiting Platform. Similar to: *Forgotten Worlds* (Genesis).

Secret Scout in the Temple of Demise

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

This dreadful, repetitious game has players guiding a chubby little boy scout, who has been separated from his troops, back to civilization. The scout runs, climbs ladders, jumps on platforms, and leaps over pits, and he can pick up such items as a map, rope, shields (for temporary invincibility), torches (for lighting up dark rooms), keys (for opening gated doors), dynamite (for opening sealed doors, attacking enemies, and performing a super-jump), and boomerangs. Unfortunately, the so-called Secret Scout's primary weapon is a goofy looking short-range kick, which is weak and ineffectual. This makes the Indians, guards, gangsters, archers, ninjas, pirates, skeletons, and other enemies a chore to de-

feat. The action takes place amidst jungles, temples, and other such locales. Like all Color Dreams titles for the NES, *Secret Scout* is uncensored.

Section Z

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

When developing *Section Z* for the NES, Capcom obviously tried to make the game different from their 1985 arcade original. Namely, the NES game incorporates a frustrating non-linear component. At the end of each level, players can select one of two routes, meaning repeating earlier levels is a given. In addition, the objectives are needlessly confusing (a situation not helped at all by the instruction manual), the vertically scrolling levels have been removed, and the steady stream of grenades has been replaced by an oddly configured (not to mention totally useless) missile-firing technique in which pressing A and B simultaneously makes the missile appear in the center of the screen. Numerous other changes were made as well (including the addition of shields, but no



Nine NES cartridges: *Section Z*, *RoadBlasters*, *Bad Dudes*, *Dragon Spirit*, *The New Legend*, *The Legend of Kage*, *Trojan*, *NARC*, *Star Force*, and *Legendary Wings*.

health meter), none worth recommending. Regarding nuts-and-bolts gameplay, players guide a jetpack-wearing Captain Commando through futuristic tunnels of rock and industrialized metal, firing left and right at clone soldiers, missile drones, metal crabs, mechanical eyeballs, spiral gunships, and other enemies.

Seicross

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon
Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

The evil Basrahs drove the peaceful Petras underground, where they developed the Gilgitt, a specially equipped motor scooter. Players must ride this vehicle through three levels (Obstacle Zone, Slippery Zone, and Battery Zone), firing laser beams at aliens, dinosaur fossils, strange plants, hostile bikes (which can bump you into obstacles), energy cannons, living bombs, and other enemies. Shooting reduces energy (which can be replenished by grabbing energy packs), so it's a good strategy to avoid confrontation whenever possible. Rescuing fellow Petras earns bonus points while grabbing power stars (which appear after radar buoys have been shot) charges up the laser beam. The forced scrolling moves at a rapid clip (with music to match), making the game a challenge. *Seicross* for the NES is a nice port of the 1984 Nichibutsu arcade game.

Sesame Street ABC

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Rare. Educational/Spelling/General, 1 player. 1989.

This 8-bit take on the long-running PBS children's show includes two distinct games. In Letter-Go-Round, a letter sits in each basket of a ferris wheel. As the wheel spins, kids must select the correct letters to spell words or create matches. Bert replaces letters on the wheel while Big Bird dances to celebrate correct answers. In Ernie's Big Splash, which is designed to help kids learn planning, problem solving, predicting, cause and effect, and spatial relationships, players use a washing machine, a water slide, a friendly alligator, and other building pieces to create a pathway leading

Rubber Ducky from his soap dish into Ernie's bathtub. Both games offer a solid educational experience as well as cute graphics and sounds. Recommended for pre-schoolers.

Sesame Street ABC & 123

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expression. DEVELOPER: Rare. Educational/Spelling/Math/General, 1 player. 1991.

This cartridge contains two previously released games: *Sesame Street ABC* and *Sesame Street 123*.

Sesame Street: Big Bird's Hide and Speak

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. RSP. Educational/General, 1 player. 1990.

Enhanced by digitized voice effects and colorful, cartoon-like graphics, *Big Bird's Hide and Speak* uses the *Sesame Street* license to very nice effect. In each of the game's six modes of play, Big Bird stands outside an apartment building that has four windows. Elmo, Ernie, the Count, and other characters enter the building and appear in the windows, and players must guide Little Bird (who acts as a cursor of sorts) to the correct window based on the clue that a computer-controlled Big Bird calls out, such as the character name, the letter accompanying the character, or a three-letter word. Starring the voice of Carroll Spiney, who plays Big Bird on the *Sesame Street* television series, *Big Bird's Hide and Speak* is designed to teach children basic recognition, memorization (windows can be closed), and spelling skills.

Sesame Street Countdown

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: RSP. Educational/Math, 1 player. 1992.

At the beginning of each level in *Sesame Street Countdown*, a wheel of numbers begins spinning, and players, as the Count, must jump up to touch a number. For the rest of the level, side-scrolling action ensues, in which Count walks along looking for representations of that touched number, such as groupings of smiley faces or ice cream cones or the actual numeral itself. In Hop mode, Count automatically hops

to each grouping or numeral, meaning the player's job is to simply figure out the correct number. In Run mode, players must guide Count to the numbers. Unfortunately, a programming glitch causes numbers to sometimes be placed directly on top of bits of scenery that cannot be walked over or jumped through, forcing players to pick the wrong number in order to progress. The game stars the digitized voice of Jerry Nelson, who voices the Count on the *Sesame Street* television series.

Sesame Street 123

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Rare. Educational/Math/General, 1 player. 1989.

Sesame Street 123, which contains two separate games (along with a number of variations), has cute graphics, charming music, and a kid-friendly approach to making learning fun. In Ernie's Magic Shapes, a shape or item composed of shapes appears above Ernie's head, and players must help Ernie select the correct shape or shapes that correspond to that image (the size and color of the shape can be determining factors). After the image has been completed, Ernie's magic bunny pops out of a hat and waves. In Astro-Grover, players add, subtract, and count little green men called Zips, which hail from the planet Zap. A series of correct answers rewards players with the building of Grover's city, or with the launching a space-ship.

720°

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Mindscape. Sports/Skateboarding, 1 player. 1989.

Based on Atari's highly influential 1986 arcade game, which benefited from a spinning controller, voice effects, and a pair of boom box-like speakers, *720°* for the NES is a simplified, though nicely realized port. Players skate around a main park, avoiding cars, thugs, and killer bees while pulling off moves (spins, handstands, and the like) to earn tickets to gain entrance to smaller parks and four different events: Downhill, Slalom, Jump, and Ramp. Money earned or found can be used to purchase helmets, skateboards, shoes, and pads.

The action is viewed from an isometric perspective. To fit the perceived demographic of the average NES owner, the skateboarder in this version of the game is much younger looking than his coin-op counterpart. Also released for the Game Boy Color.

Shadow of the Ninja

PUBLISHER: Natsume. DEVELOPER: Natsume. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

In the year 2029, the mad emperor Garuda and his minions control New York City, and it is up to a pair of ninja warriors to save the day. After selecting Hayate (a male) or Kaede (a female), players must battle through five multi-stage levels (Sea Port, Underground Sewers, Rooftops of the City, Air Fortress, and Final Fortress), using a katana, shurikens, lightning bolts, energy blasts, bombs, and a sickle to battle robots, soldiers, guards, ninjas, and other enemies. Players will also climb, dodge traps, grab poles (and swing up onto them), jump on moving platforms and over gaps, and more. The game lacks the cinematic cut scenes of such similar titles as *Ninja Gaiden* and *Wrath of the Black Manta*, but it does offer two-player simultaneous action (ala *Contra*). Not much in the way of originality going on here, but *Shadow of the Ninja* is a great action title with nice visuals and excellent gameplay.

Shadowgate

PUBLISHER: Kemco/Seika. DEVELOPER: ICOM Simulations. First-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

Adapted from the computer game, *Shadowgate* for the NES is a point-and-click adventure in which players explore an atmospheric, maze-like castle, trying to prevent the evil Warlock Lord from bringing darkness upon the land. The screen is divided into three views: physical environment (depicting current location, puzzles, and monsters); inventory of items, weapons, and spells (arrow, blade, cloak, helmet, mirror, torch, and much more); and list of commands (look, take, open, close, use, hit, leave, speak, and move). Fun and challenging the first time through (but much easier

upon succession), *Shadowgate* is similar to *Déjà Vu* and *Uninvited*. Includes battery backup. Also released for the Game Boy Color (as *Shadowgate Classic*). Followed by: *Beyond Shadowgate* (TurboDuo) and *Shadowgate 64: Trials of the Four Towers* (Nintendo 64).

Shatterhand

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Natsume. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Outfitted with cybernetic hands, Shatterhand is the world's only hope against an army of rogue cyborg soldiers. To vanquish his fearsome foes, he must run, jump, climb, and punch his way through seven basic, but entertaining levels: Factory, Refinery, Submarine, Filtration Plant, Anti-Gravity Research Center, Ravaged City, and Missile Command. Scattered throughout are white boxes containing letters. Collecting any combination of three letters grants Shatterhand one of eight hovering satellite robots, supplementing his punches with such weaponry as laser beams, a sword, or fireballs. Other power-ups, including health, more powerful punches, and extra lives, must be purchased.

Shingen the Ruler

PUBLISHER: Hot-B USA. DEVELOPER: Another Ltd. Turn-Based Strategy, 1 player. 1990.

Set in feudal Japan (circa 1500s), *Shingen the Ruler* finds daimyo Takeda Shingen and his son Katsuyori on a mission to conquer all 21 territories of the country. In domestic administration mode, players must build up their military, establish statecraft policy, give orders to territories, and consolidate territories. Battle mode consists of field fights, the siege of enemy castles, the occupation of enemy territory, and the gaining of rank, experience, troops, and war trophies. Two types of battle are available: automatic, in which the computer takes over; and manual, in which players move troops. Includes battery backup. Similar to: *Genghis Khan* (NES).

Shinobi

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

A quick glance at the manual would lead one to believe that *Shinobi* for the NES is equal to its Master System counterpart. Everything initially appears to be intact, from the lead character (a Master Ninja) to the five bosses (Ken Oh, Black Turtle, Mandara, Lobster, and Masked Ninja) to the first-person bonus stages to the running, jumping, punching, kicking, shooting (shurikens and knives), sword-thrusting, magic-using action. Unfortunately for Nintendo apologists, the NES game is easily the inferior port (of Sega's 1987 arcade original), thanks to poor controls, loss of background detail, easier gameplay, and some gaps in programming, namely part two of the second level, which only takes the Master Ninja right and left (in the SMS version, players had to jump up to higher platforms and exit via the top of the playfield). Although playable, the NES rendition of *Shinobi* is hugely disappointing. It's unlicensed, and it shows. Also released for the Game Gear. Followed by numerous sequels and a PS2 remake.

ShockWave

PUBLISHER: American Game Cartridges. DEVELOPER: American Game Cartridges. Adventure Puzzle/Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

In *ShockWave*, players guide a floating, spacesuit-wearing character around a series of mazes, using a shockwave pistol to create pathways by moving and destroying blocks that make up the maze walls. When a block is shot by a shockwave, it is not affected directly. Rather, shockwaves reverberate through adjacent blocks, causing them to move or be destroyed (depending on the type of block). Solid blocks cannot be moved or destroyed. Other playfield elements include: firestars (which are deadly); force fields (which restrict certain types of movement); time bonuses; teleportation gateways; and crystals, the latter of which must be collected in order for the player to advance levels. Includes password feature. Unlicensed.

Shooting Range

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Light Gun Shooter, 1–4 players (alternating). 1989.

Shooting Range has players firing Nintendo's Zapper light gun at cowboys, Indians, birds, witches, ghosts, mummies, aliens, and other targets through three themed, side-scrolling stages: Western/Desert, Monster Town, and Outer Space, each of which has a time limit. Actually, players don't shoot the characters. Rather, they shoot pinwheel targets attached to the characters, presumably to cut down on the perceived violence. Shooting certain items provides extra points, energy, and time while missing shots reduces the player's energy. A special bonus stage has players shooting as many bottles as possible, and a competitive Party Game mode lets up to four players take turns shooting moving pinwheels.

Short Order/Eggsplode!

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Action, 1–5 players (alternating). 1989.

The only Nintendo-developed Power Pad cartridge, *Short Order/Eggsplode!* consists of two separate games. The *Simon*-influenced *Short Order* has players hopping on pairs of numbers on the Power Pad in order to fulfill hamburger orders placed by animal customers. The animal will hop on the ingredients (meat, cheese, lettuce, and tomato), and players must memorize the sequence and then hop on the corresponding ingredients in the correct order. Bigger animals order more ingredients. In *Eggsplode*, which is similar conceptually to *Whack-a-Mole*, up to three foxes plant bombs under nesting chickens, which are laid out in the same sequences as the buttons on the Power Pad. Players should step on said bombs while avoiding stepping on the eggs. Both games are cute and fun, and both offer the tangential benefits of aerobic exercise.

Side Pocket

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Sports/Billiards, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Based on the 1986 Data East coin-op semi-classic (which actually showed the pool player leaning over the table), *Side Pocket* offers a compelling single-player mode called Pocket, in which gamers ascend the championship ranks by achieving certain scores. For bonus points, players should sink balls in numerical order, in lighted pockets, and on consecutive shots. Trick shots with wine glass obstacles are also part of the action. There's a two-player take on Pocket pool, plus a two-player game of 9 Ball. *Side Pocket* employs a power meter and a dotted line for hitting and aiming, and players can even put spin on the ball. For those not ready for prime time, a Training mode is available. The view of the table is from overhead.

Silent Assault

PUBLISHER: Color Dreams. DEVELOPER: Joy Van. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.



Short Order/Eggsplode! and *Dance Aerobics* were designed for the NES Power Pad, which was an exercise-oriented control mat containing large buttons that players could press with their feet.

Demonic aliens have taken control of Earth's military forces, and it is up to the player, a Rambo-like commando, to save the day. The hero in question runs along, jumping over obstacles (rolling boulders, mines, torches, and the like), throwing grenades, climbing ladders, and shooting slugs, death skulls, tanks, flying balloons, and other enemies (including a sphinx boss). As in the vastly superior (playing, looking, and sounding) *Contra*, gamers can shoot forward, straight up, and from a crouched position. However, unlike *Contra*, there is no diagonal or spread fire. Players begin the game armed with a bazooka launcher and can acquire a shotgun and a machine gun by bringing down enemy surveillance crafts. Shooting facility guards sometimes releases medals of bravery (for temporary invincibility) and iron hearts (for replenishing shields). There are eight areas to battle through, including a desert, a forest, and a besieged city. Unlicensed.

Silent Service

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Rare. Naval Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1989.

Based on Sid Meier's typically complex computer game (1985), *Silent Service* for the NES is set in the South Pacific during World War II. As a submarine captain, players must take on the Japanese Navy and neutralize the Japanese Merchant Marine. This requires maneuvering a sub around a war patrol map (in order to locate enemy ships or home ports), firing torpedoes at enemy ships (located via a periscope), monitoring numerous instruments and gauges, reading crew reports, and much more. Convoy action scenarios, such as Hammerhead at Borneo and Tautog at Night, are shorter missions involving players in specific historical scenarios.

Silkworm

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: American Sammy. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

In *Silkworm*, players commandeer a highly maneuverable attack helicopter or an intercept-

tor jeep that shoots and jumps a little like the moon buggy in the arcade classic, *Moon Patrol*. In two-player mode, one gamer guides the jeep while the other pilots the chopper. Both vehicles proceed from left to right and can shoot straight ahead and at a variety of angles. Throughout seven levels of play, gamers will blow away rockets, bombers, tanks, ships, turrets, land mines, robotic vehicles, and MH Snakehead helicopters, the latter of which provide items that double your firepower, give you shields, and increase your speed, score, and ranking. Despite less graphical detail, *Silkworm* is an exciting, quickly paced port of Tecmo's 1988 arcade game (which is spelled *Silk Worm*).

Silver Surfer

PUBLISHER: Arcadia Systems. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

The Silver Surfer is one of the most powerful super-heroes in the Marvel Universe. However, in this game he can be one-hit killed by fish, ducks, and riverbanks. In addition, the surfboard makes for a long target, many passages are narrow, and projectiles move quickly, making the action frustratingly hard. Players guide the Surfer through five selectable worlds (Reptyl, Mephisto, Skrull Emperor, Possessor, and Firelord), using cosmic powered bullets, smart bombs, and orbs to destroy a variety of creatures, gun emplacements, ships, and other enemies.

The Simpsons: Bart vs. the Space Mutants

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

Bart vs. The Space Mutants finds Springfield under attack by monsters taking over the bodies of people who live there. To thwart the aliens' plans of building an ultimate weapon, Bart must jump on enemies, use X-ray specs to uncover mutants, spray paint purple objects, find hats (and knock hats off of people), shoot

balloons with a slingshot, and collect exit signs and power rods. Bart can also collect coins to purchase items and play mini-games. The controls are iffy, and frustration can be an issue, but the game is infused with the show's trademark humor and features many of its locations and characters, including bad guys Nelson, Sideshow Bob, and Dr. Marvin Monroe. Homer, Marge, Lisa, and Maggie are on hand to help with boss battles, but Bart has to perform certain feats within the levels for this to happen. Also released for the Genesis.

The Simpsons: Bart vs. the World

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Imagineer-ing. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

The evil Montgomery Burns has sent Bart Simpson on a treasure hunt through Egypt, China, the North Pole, and other exotic locations. Throughout his adventure, Bart will collect diamonds, throw firecrackers and snowballs at enemies, jump over gaps and onto platforms, ride a skateboard, fly as Bartman, encounter other Simpsons, and more. Simple bonus games, including Sliding Puzzle, Card Match, Simpsons Trivia, and Slot Machine, are at the end of each stage. Though ambitious in scope, *Bart vs. the World* is hampered by poor controls and dull gameplay.

The Simpsons: Bartman Meets Radioactive Man

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Bart Simpson dons cape and cowl to help his heroes—Radioactive Man and Fallout Boy—in this playable, but mediocre platformer. Armed with a mighty-punch, a super-kick, a spin-kick, and a double fistful mighty-blow, Bartman must run, jump, swim, fly, and battle his way through such locales as a junkyard, a swamp, a sea bed, and an underground city.

To make things a bit easier, Bart can pick up two types of weaponry: laser bolts and ice crystals, the latter of which emit cold breaths for fighting bad guys (including Swamp Hag, Lava Man, and Dr. Crab) and freezing objects (to make platforms). *Bartman Meets Radioactive Man* was the final game in Acclaim's disappointing *Simpsons* trilogy on the NES.

6 in 1

PUBLISHER: Caltron. DEVELOPER: Caltron. Multi-Game Compilation, 1 player. 1992.

This unlicensed release features six games in one cartridge. *Cosmos Cop* is somewhat similar to *Space Harrier*, with the titular character firing a cannon and neutron missiles at alien invaders and their installations and defenses. *Porter* is a *Shove It!*-type puzzle game in which players push boxes to positions that are marked by stars. *Booky Man*, which is similar to *Crush Roller* (arcade, 1981), has players guiding a beetle through a maze, cleaning



Licensing played a big role in the NES library, evidenced in part by such titles as: *Silver Surfer* (based on the Marvel Comics hero); *Star Wars* (based on the 1977 feature film); *Popeye* (based on the cartoon character and on Nintendo's own arcade game); and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (based on the comic book and cartoon heroes).

streets while avoiding lizards and a “bugger.” Magic Carpet has players flying over Baghdad, firing arrows at goblins. Balloon Monster is a slide-and-shoot game in which players fire at bouncing balloons that split into smaller ones when shot. In Adam and Eve, players glide on a balloon, trying to pop the evil serpent’s balloon while keeping their balloon from being popped. After Caltron went under, Myriad bought out all the unsold copies of *6 in 1* and sold the cartridges under their own brand name.

Skate or Die

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Sports/Skateboarding, 1–8 players (alternating). 1988.

Between *720°* (arcade, 1986) and *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* (PlayStation, 1999) lies *Skate or Die*, a popular NES title taking place in a “rad infested world.” This extreme sports cartridge features five events: Downhill Jam (race through alleys, punching and kicking skaters and obstacles); Joust (cruise around a drained swimming pool, hitting the other skater with a stick); Freestyle Competition (do aerials, kick-turns, and other tricks); High Jump (perform jumps on a side-view ramp); and Downhill Racing (jump ramps, duck through pipes, skate around flags). Based on the 1987 computer game.

Skate or Die 2: The Search for Double Trouble

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts. DEVELOPER: Electronic Arts. Side-Scrolling Platform/Sports/Skateboarding, 1 player. 1990.

The Search for Double Trouble deviates from the original *Skate or Die* by offering four levels of platforming action: Mad Dogs in the Streets; Money in the Mall; Blowin’ Along the Boardwalk; and Rooftop Mania. Players skateboard through the city, battling enemies and gathering up such items as food, CDs, and tapes to trade for tricks and new skateboards. Kickturns, tail bumps, and other tricks are used to perform fighting moves and unleash such weapons as M-80s and eggs. The fifth and final level is the Double Trouble Competition, in

which players perform tricks on skateboarding ramps, which are viewed from the side.

Ski or Die

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Sports/Skiing, 1–6 players (alternating). 1991.

A spin-off from the *Skate or Die* series, *Ski or Die* consists of five wintry events: Inner Tube Thrash (race down a mountain, grab sharp objects to poke the opponent’s inner tube); Snow Board Half Pipe (cruise down a tube, perform tricks, grab penguins, avoid bunnies and logs); Acro Aerials (ski fast, perform stunts after jumping); Downhill Blitz (do stunts while skiing downhill); and Snowball Blast (a first-person snowball fight). Rodney Recloose from *Skate or Die* runs a ski shop where players access high scores and select Practice or Competition mode. Based on the 1990 computer game.

Skull & Crossbones

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Skull & Crossbones for the NES deviates from its graphically superior coin-op counterpart (Atari, 1989) in a number of ways, making it a disappointing port. The arcade game emphasized skill-based sword fighting while the NES version focuses more on platforming and varied selectable weapons, including a cutlass, a gun, a dagger, a super fist, homing missiles, and bubble blowers. Enemies include archers, bats, demons, ninjas, skeletons, and others. The two-player simultaneous action remains intact, but it’s now split-screen, and the story has been altered to make the protagonist pirate a princess-rescuing hero. Areas to battle through include Castle, Ninja Camp, Pirate Ship, Beach Cave, and Wizard Isle. Unlicensed.

Sky Shark

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

As in *Xevious* and *Tiger-Heli*, *Sky Shark* has players flying over land and sea, shooting bullets at airborne enemies and dropping bombs on ground-based targets. The game’s five levels

are filled with tanks, planes, gunboats, railway cars, bunkers, naval guns, and other hostile forces, keeping the player's P-40 Tiger Shark Fighter constantly moving and shooting to avoid destruction. Certain enemy planes fly in formation, and shooting down a whole wave gives players bonus points or enhanced machine gun fire. The arcade version of *Sky Shark* (Taito, 1987) has better graphics, but the NES port has a faster fighter plane (in relation to its respective enemies), making it a fairer, more enjoyable game.

SkyKid

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Like its coin-op counterpart (Namco, 1985), the delightful, yet fairly obscure *SkyKid* for the NES has players flying a small plane from right to left, shooting machine gun bullets (straight and diagonally) at tanks, trucks, boats, airplanes, and other enemies. As in *Looping* and *1942*, the plane can fly in loops. Each level contains a bomb players should pick up for use in destroying that level's main target, which consists of enemy headquarters, a battleship, a small row of factories, or an aircraft carrier. Taking off and landing are easy, but dodging enemy fire gets difficult pretty quickly. Fortunately, button-mashing lets players try to recover from a spin. The arcade version has cuter graphics and better music, but the NES cartridge does keep the basic gameplay intact, along with the playful animations. NES additions include girlfriends who blow kisses and a target practice bonus round. Subtractions include various bits of in-game text.

Slalom

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Rare. Sports/Skiing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Popular developer Rare's first console video game, *Slalom* eschews the distant viewpoint of most previous skiing games (such as *Skiing* for the Atari 2600) in favor of a behind-the-skier perspective. The result is a game that feels decidedly stagnant, with the skier seemingly

standing still while slalom flags, sledders, snowmen, opposing skiers, and trees appear in the distance and whiz past. Players can perform tricks, and there are 24 snow-covered runs, but the game has bland graphics and is disappointingly lacking in sense of motion.

Smash T.V.

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Despite smaller characters and items and scratchy sounding gunfire and voice effects, *Smash T.V.* for the NES is a decent port of Williams' 1990 arcade game, which is a scathing piece of sociological science fiction in which futuristic viewers demand more violence on television. Players, as game show contestants (shades of Stephen King's *The Running Man*), must run around a series of closed, overhead-view arenas, firing a near-constant stream of machine gun bullets at cyborg mutants, power orbs, and tactical assault tanks. Item pick-ups include scatter guns, missiles, spew weapons, ninja blades, fast feet, gold, and other items. Gameplay evokes *Robotron: 2084*, and players can use two control pads to semi-emulate the arcade game's dual joystick control. As the manual states, the two-controller method allows players to "move in one direction and shoot in the same (or any other) direction at the same time." Multi-tap adapter compatible. Followed by: *Super Smash T.V.* (Genesis, SNES, Game Gear).

Snake Rattle N Roll

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Rare. Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Featuring crisp, clear, colorful, pseudo-3D graphics viewed from an isometric perspective, *Snake Rattle N Roll* resembles such classics as *Congo Bongo* and *Crystal Castles*. Each player controls a running, jumping, swimming, tongue-flicking snake as it goes about eating enough "Nibbley Pibbles" to open the exit to the next level. All this while avoiding or attacking sharks, Big Foot, Ice Foot, snakedozers, and other kooky enemies. Power-ups to grab include: tongue extensions; speed-ups; a fish tail

(for swimming up the waterfall in level 6); diamonds (for invincibility); and clocks (for extra time). *Snake Rattle N Roll* is wacky good fun, and the piano music sounds great, but the controls could use some fine tuning to make the game a bit easier.

Snake's Revenge

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami. Adventure/Stealth, 1 player. 1990.

The North American follow-up to *Metal Gear*, *Snake's Revenge* is set three years after its progenitor. Gameplay follows a similar premise, with Solid Snake sneaking through enemy territory to retrieve a weapon known as Metal Gear. To prevent detection, Snake should move quietly, avoid guards, and stay away from search lights and security cameras. As in *Metal Gear*, an overhead viewpoint is employed, but action-heavy side-scrolling scenes have been added to the formula. In addition, there are more areas to infiltrate, including jungles, buildings, a boat, prison camps, a train, a castle, a factory, and a desert base. Snake punches bad guys and can pick up a variety of items, including guns, knives, mines, plastic explosives, grenades, missiles, card keys, binoculars, infrared goggles, body armor, mine detectors, smoke bombs, and truth gas. Since series creator Hideo Kojima had no involvement in creating *Snake's Revenge*, many purists consider the Japanese *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake* to be the true sequel to *Metal Gear*.

Snoopy's Silly Sports Spectacular!

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Sports/Multiple, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1990.

Snoopy's Silly Sports Spectacular! pits Snoopy against his mustachioed cousin Spike in six quick, simple, Olympic-style events: Sack Race (hop to the right, avoid manholes); Boot Throwing (similar to discus throwing); Pile of Pizza (walk slowly while balancing a stack of pizzas); Pogo (hop on a pogo stick to the right, jump over each bar); Overboard (push the other dog off the gondola); and River Jump (pole-vault over a river). The cartoon-like graphics will please *Peanuts* fans, as will the inclusion

of Woodstock, who appears in cameos. The games are limited in nature, but fairly enjoyable. Interestingly, the original Japanese Famicom version used Donald Duck and other Disney characters instead of the Snoopy license.

Snow Brothers

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Toaplan. Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Colorful and fun, *Snow Brothers* plays a lot like *Bubble Bobble*, but replaces dinosaurs Bub and Bob with snowmen Nick and Tom. Players hop and run around each platform-laden screen (50 in all), throwing snow (as opposed to bubbles) at enemies with names like Pumpkin Head, Cold Fish, and Ice-Bat, packing them into snowballs after multiple hits (an aspect that separates the game from *Bubble Bobble*). After an enemy becomes a snowball, it can be rolled into other enemies and off the screen. Defeated enemies sometimes leave such power-ups as red hot sauce (speed skates), blue hot sauce (power shots), or green hot sauce (farther throwing ability). *Snow Brothers* is hard to find, but well worth seeking out.

Soccer

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Sports/Soccer, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Viewed from an angled/overhead perspective, *Soccer* for the NES is a slow, six-on-six version of the popular sport, played on a horizontally scrolling field. A number over the head indicates which soccer player is being controlled (it will be the player closest to the ball) while an arrow in front of the opponent's goal determines the direction of a shot on goal. This was the first soccer game for the NES, and it has lots of features, including throw-ins, corner kicks, indirect free kicks, penalty kicks, and a half-time show (complete with cheerleaders). Players can select from five difficulty levels and seven international teams: Brazil, Germany, Spain, France, England, Japan, and The United States. The computer is a pushover, so two-player action is recommended.

Solar Jetman Hunt for the Golden Warpship

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Solar Jetman is an unusual shooter. The controls are similar to *Asteroids* (rotate, thrust, fire), but, like *Gravitar* (another game with *Asteroids*-style controls), the jetpod ship is susceptible to gravity, making it a challenge to avoid planets, obstacles (black holes and the like), and enemy ships (including saucers, cannons, double-barreled piston pumpers, and crystal snappers). The objective is to gather pieces of the Golden Warpship, which are scattered on 12 alien planets across the galaxy. While towing a spaceship part, the jetpod sways with the weight of that object, adding to the challenge, fun, and unusual nature of the game. Hurrying through a level is a surefire method for getting killed. Stellar graphics and sounds are icing on the proverbial cake. Includes password feature.

Solitaire

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Odyssey Software. Card Game, 1 player. 1992.

The box for *Solitaire* claims that “you are all alone on a beautiful tropical island,” but the solid green background found in this simple game of Klondike (an earlier name for solitaire) would indicate otherwise (perhaps “grassy field” would have been less hyperbolic). Players can select from five different card backs, five different color combinations, and whether or not to have the music and sound effects turned on or off. There are two modes of play: One Card Draw and Three Card Draw. To pick up and place cards (in descending order on the layout cards or ascending order on the foundation piles), gamers guide a cartoonish looking hand around the screen. Winners are acknowledged by the spelling out of “YOU WIN” with lettered cards. Unlicensed.

Solomon's Key

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Maze/Action Puzzle/Non-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1987.

A wizard named Dana has been commissioned to rid the world of demons. Equipped with the power to generate square stones, which are used as stair steps, barriers, and floating platforms, Dana must walk and jump his way around each of 50 different timed rooms, avoiding monsters while trying to grab a key and take it to the doorway leading to the next room. In addition to the type of blocks Dana creates, which can be destroyed, each room contains solid blocks that cannot be removed. By grabbing certain items, Dana can shoot fireballs, release fairies (10 of which grant Dana an extra life), destroy all enemies at once, and more. Most of the rooms in *Solomon's Key* are deviously difficult (in a good way), forcing players to think their way past the numerous obstacles and monsters impeding their progress. Predictably, the arcade version (Tecmo, 1986) is more crisply rendered, but this is a very nice port of a cult classic. Followed by: *Solomon's Club* (Game Boy) and *Fire 'n Ice* (NES).

Solstice: The Quest for the Staff of Demnos

PUBLISHER: CSG Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

To rescue Princess Eleanor from Morbius the Malevolent, Shadax must explore more than 250 rooms of Kastlerock fortress (which is viewed from an isometric perspective), searching for six pieces of a magical staff. Shadax can walk through portals, detonate bombs to blast holes in walls, ride crystal balls through the air, and use various potions to freeze moving objects, become invincible, and more. Many rooms contain blocks, which can be picked up and carried, walked on like steps, and used as protection against pyramid spikes. Other obstacles (and enemies) include needle spikes, skulls, eyeballs, trolls, and slime balls. Followed by: *Equinox* (SNES).

Space Shuttle Project

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Flight Simulator, 1 player. 1991.

Space Shuttle Project was designed by former Activision employees (David “Pitfall!” Crane

even lent his voice to the project), making it an unofficial sequel of sorts to *Space Shuttle: A Journey Into Space* for the Atari 2600. Gameplay is predictably complex, with armchair astronauts performing a variety of tasks, including activating the shuttle's oxygen and hydrogen pumps, escorting crew members into the orbiter, breaking gravitational pull and entering into orbit, launching a satellite, constructing a space station, rescuing a cosmonaut, reentering Earth's atmosphere, and much more. The manual is required reading.

Spelunker

PUBLISHER: Broderbund. DEVELOPER: IREM. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1987.

A graphically enhanced rendition of the 1983 MicroGraphicImage computer game, *Spelunker* for the NES has players exploring caves deep beneath the Earth, shooting a phantom blaster at ghosts and firing a flare gun to scare away bats. Finding keys to unlock doors to various passages is crucial, as is using dynamite to blow away rocks blocking your path. There are ropes and ladders to climb and elevators, boats, and mine cars to ride. Jumping can be tricky, and falling a short distance can result in death, making for a difficult, but immersive game. IREM released an arcade version in 1985. Similar to: *Montezuma's Revenge* (Master System, various).

Spider-Man: Return of the Sinister Six

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: B.I.T.S. Studios. Side-Scrolling Platform/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

Loosely based on *Amazing Spider-Man* #s 334–339 (published by Marvel Comics), *Return of the Sinister Six* is the only Spider-Man game for the NES. Unfortunately, it's mediocre at best, thanks to poor collision detection, lousy controls, and hackneyed level design. Players control the web-slinging hero as he punches, kicks, and shoots webbing at such bad guys as Electro, Sandman, Mysterio, Vulture, Hobgoblin, and Doctor Octopus. Spidey can also jump, crouch, turn somersaults, climb, and pick up and use the following items: a key (for opening

a locked door); a TNT detonator (for blowing open a secret passage); and infra-red goggles (for seeing in the dark). The action takes place in the following New York City locations: The Power Station, Toxic Waste Dump, The House of Illusion, Streets and Rooftops, The Forest & Hobgoblin's Cave, and Doc Ock's Castle. Also released for the Game Gear.

Spiritual Warfare

PUBLISHER: Wisdom Tree. DEVELOPER: Wisdom Tree. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1992.

A poor man's *The Legend of Zelda*, *Spiritual Warfare* was produced by Wisdom Tree, the company infamous for its unlicensed religious games. While traveling through a park, a prison, the woods, and other areas of town, players must throw "fruits of the spirit" to convert unsaved souls (i.e. defeat enemies). Defeating a boss reveals one of the following pieces of the armor of God: belt of truth (for pushing obstacles); boots of the gospel (for walking across rubble and wet cement); helmet of salvation (protection from explosions); breastplate of righteousness (cuts damage taken by half); shield of faith (cuts damage taken by an additional half); or sword of the spirit (the sword bursts when it is thrown). Other useful items include: Samson's jawbone (for beating certain bosses); keys (for opening locked doors); and torches (to see special blocks in puzzle rooms). Periodically, an angel will present players with Bible trivia questions, and Christian Helpers are on hand to offer advice. Includes password feature.

Spot: The Video Game!

PUBLISHER: Arcadia Systems. DEVELOPER: Arcadia Systems. Board Game, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on *Infection*, the European computer game, *Spot* has players moving round pieces on a customizable 7 × 7 board, trying to change all the pieces on the board to their color. Moving a piece to an adjacent empty space duplicates the piece by one. Moving a piece to an empty space that is bordered by any opponents' pieces turns those pieces to the moving player's

color. Players can also skip their piece over one or two spaces, but the space the piece started in will become empty. When a piece is moved, Spot, the red, round, shades-wearing, 7UP mascot performs one of 35 different animations. Landing on the Secret Spot unlocks a spinning-reel mini-game in which players can win a free turn, extra time, a free move to any square, or the ability to swap a piece with another player. Also released for the Game Boy. Spot appeared in numerous other video games, including *Cool Spot* (SNES, various) and *Spot Goes to Hollywood* (Genesis, various).

Spy Hunter

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1987.

Viewed from overhead, the oft-ported *Spy Hunter* puts players at the wheel of a specially equipped Ferrari, driving up country roads (lined with trees and the like), firing a machine gun at limousines, helicopters, motorcycles, and other enemies, some of which fire back. When a weapons van appears, players should enter it to obtain oil slicks, smoke screens, and missiles. Occasionally, a boathouse will appear in which players switch out their sports car for a boat. The shooting action in the rivers is similar to the streets, but no weapons van appears, and enemies include such watercrafts as speedboats and cruise boats. Like the original coin-op classic (Bally/Midway, 1983), the game features the theme from *Peter Gunn*. However, the NES version moves faster (causing some frustration) and is missing the “Beware of the enemy agents” points screen. Sequels include: *Spy Hunter II* (arcade) and *Super Spy Hunter* (NES). Remade for the PS2, GameCube, Game Boy Advance, and Xbox.

Spy vs Spy

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: Kemco. Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Based on the 1984 computer game (which was based on the *Mad* magazine comic strip), *Spy vs Spy* for the NES pits the pointy nosed Heckel (white spy) against his virtual twin Jackel (black spy) as they traverse a maze of side-view rooms, setting booby-traps (dynamite,

giant springs, water buckets, and time bombs) for one another while searching for a passport, a bag of money, a key, secret papers, and the exit. To disable the traps, spies can collect water buckets, wire cutters, and umbrellas. A split-screen layout allows for two-player action, and a mapping system helps gamers keep track of both spies and the locations of the items and traps. Hand-to-hand combat ensues when both spies enter one room. Also released for the Master System and Game Boy Color. Followed by: *Spy vs Spy—Operation: Booby-trap* (Game Boy). In 2005, a 3D take on the strip was released for the Xbox.

Sqoon

PUBLISHER: Irem. DEVELOPER: Homedata. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Emboldened by a hankering for some “man-ham,” aliens from Neptune have melted Earth’s polar ice caps, sinking all its cities under water. To save the day, players must pilot a submarine (from left to right) through eight areas (New York, Hawaii, China, India, Egypt, Greece, England, and the North Pole), shooting missiles and ice balls at crabs, sharks, sea horses, robots, mines, and other Neptunian threats. Enemies don’t shoot back, but making contact with a vessel, creature, or other enemy is lethal. To earn points, refuel, gain speed, and power-up the missiles, players should rescue humans—who are freed by shooting domes and factories along the ocean floor—and deliver them to the surface. Obscure and simplistic (in a good way), *Sqoon* is a fun, fair, and challenging shooter that should appeal to retro enthusiasts. Irem later released another sub shooter, *In the Hunt*, for the arcades, PlayStation, and Saturn.

Stack-Up

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1985.

Designed for use with R.O.B., *Stack-Up* comes packaged with five trays and five round blocks (red, white, blue, yellow, and green). By using the control pad to move Professor Hector on top of command keys depicted onscreen,

players prompt the Robotic Operating Buddy to pick up and move the soft plastic blocks. The objective is to transport the blocks from a starting configuration to a final configuration as fast as possible, using as few moves as possible. In terms of strategy and fun, *Stack-Up* is superior to *Gyromite*, the only other R.O.B.-compatible game, but it is much harder to find complete pieces. A system launch title.

Stadium Events

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai.
Sports/Track & Field, 1–6 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1987.

Later published by Nintendo as *World Class Track Meet*, *Stadium Events* is one of the rarest licensed games in the NES library, thanks to Nintendo forcing the game off the market once they began producing it under the *WCTM* moniker. The cartridge contains four events: 100M Dash, 110M Hurdles, Long Jump, and Triple Jump, each requiring the use of the Family Fun Fitness control mat (later released by Nintendo as the Power Pad). The events are viewed from behind, with players (standing alone or side by side with a second player) hopping, stepping, jogging in place, and otherwise pressing buttons on the mat with their feet in order to get the onscreen characters to run and jump. Tournament and The Olympics modes are available, the latter of which lets 1–6 players perform all four events in a row. Computer opponents are named after animals: Turtle, Bear, Horse, Rabbit, Bobcat, and Cheetah.

Stanley: the Search for Dr. Livingston

PUBLISHER: Electro Brain. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Adventure/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Set in the African Congo (circa 1871), *Stanley: the Search for Dr. Livingston* puts players in the role of an adventurer on a perilous mission to find an explorer who got lost while searching for the legendary Temple of Am-Zutuk. Stanley begins the game equipped with Dr. Livingston's notes, an auto-gyro copter (for soft landings), and the ability to punch the various soldiers, guards, giant spiders, man-eating

plants, and other enemies that inhabit the eight levels of play. Stanley can add various items to his arsenal, including a machete, a blowgun, rocks, bows and arrows, a battle axe, spears, keys, maps, a grapnel, rope, and shields. There's plenty of action (running, jumping, climbing, and crawling), but figuring out how each item is used plays a key role, as does talking to characters to access news and information. Includes password feature.

Star Force

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft.
Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Set in the year 2100 Dimensional Almanac, *Star Force* has players battling the murderous planet Gordess, which is divided into 24 fly-over sections. Each section is swarming with zigging, zagging, swirling enemy ships that are simplistic in design (squares, circles, diamonds, letters, and other shapes), and each section has ground-based targets that are destroyed via standard firepower (meaning there are no bombs or other air-to-surface weaponry). The ship gamers pilot is called the Final Star, and it fires a Star Beam Gun, which is a dual-firing mechanism. Occasionally, players can grab a power-up that makes the bullets and the ship move 1.5 times faster. One unusual aspect of this otherwise ordinary (if highly challenging) game is the ship's imperviousness to light contact on its wings, meaning destroying enemies from the side is possible. Predictably, though this is a very nicely programmed port, the original arcade version (Tehkan, 1984) has sharper graphics and sounds. Followed by: *Final Star Force* (arcade).

Star Soldier

PUBLISHER: Taxan. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft.
Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

In this fast-moving, rapid-fire shooter, players dart their ship (called Caesar) over a floating, 16-stage space station, firing double shots at enemy ships and robot creatures, some of which resemble giant insects. The flying enemies move in a variety of patterns, and there are ground-based targets as well, including eyeballs, snakes, skulls, and stars. Shooting P-marks

releases capsules that can be grabbed to increase the ship's speed and give it shields and three- and five-way firing capabilities. At the end of each stage, players must destroy the evil Starbrain or repeat the level. One unusual feature is the Trap Zone, which lets players fly under certain segments of the space station to avoid enemies. Followed by numerous sequels, including *Super Star Soldier* (Turbografx-16), *Star Soldier: Vanishing Earth* (Nintendo 64), and *Star Soldier R* (Nintendo Wii).

Star Trek: The Next Generation

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Space Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1993.

Under the tutelage of Captain Picard, players of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* commandeer a holographic Starship Enterprise, utilizing the skills of Riker, Worf, Data, LaForge, and O'Brien to perform various missions. A complex control scheme enables the crew to raise shields, fire phasers and photon torpedoes (during real-time battle sequences), find intruders and beam them off the ship, repair life support systems, go into orbit, reallocate power, set course and warp speed, perform sensor readings, and more. The NES version of the game is similar to its Game Boy counterpart, but, of course, with better graphics and sounds. The game features digitized faces of Picard and company and a passable rendition of the TV show theme song. Includes password feature.

Star Trek: 25th Anniversary

PUBLISHER: Ultra Software. DEVELOPER: Konami/Interplay. Third-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1992.

Take charge of the Starship Enterprise as Captain Kirk in *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* for the NES. While collecting data on strange disturbances in the local gravitational and magnetic fields near Sigma Iotia, the ship and her crew are suddenly thrust into an uncharted region of space. It is up to Kirk to return to the Iotian system and reverse an expanding rip in space before it destroys the galaxy. From the bridge of the ship, Kirk controls navigation,

communication, and battle tactics (firing phasers and photon torpedoes at enemy ships), and he can call on Commander Spock (science), Chief Engineer Scott, Lieutenant Uhura (communications), Chekov and Sulu (navigation/helm), and Doctor McCoy for status reports. Kirk and company will also beam down to strange planets in order to talk to natives, analyze plant life and ancient artifacts, use phasers to stun or kill hostile aliens, and more. Includes password feature. Much different than the Game Boy version.

Star Voyager

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: ASCII. Space Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1987.

A difficult and fairly complex game, *Star Voyager* for the NES (not to be confused with the Atari 2600 game of the same name) puts players in the cockpit of a RH 119 warship, which is equipped with laser cannons, barrier shields, a life support system, and a fully-integrated bio-computer named Adam. The mission is to protect a stationary transport ship called the CosmoStation Noah from intergalactic terrorists. This is done by: selecting coordinates from a map screen; warping to various enemy sectors; avoiding black holes and asteroids; raising shields when under fire; visiting planets for engine and weapon upgrades; docking with space stations to effect repairs; and, of course, destroying enemy ships. As with most space combat simulators, the action is seen through the view screen of the ship, giving the game elements of a first-person shooter.

Star Wars

PUBLISHER: JVC. DEVELOPER: Lucasfilm/Beam Software. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1991.

This was the first *Star Wars* video game to reenact more than just a few select scenes from the 1977 film. Players must do the following: pilot a land speeder on Tatooine; rescue Princess Leia; survive the trash compactor; navigate the Millennium Falcon through an asteroid field; guide an X-Wing Fighter on a mission to destroy the Death Star; battle bad guys with blasters and a light saber; run and jump on perilous platforms; and much more. Luke Sky-

walker, Princess Leia, and Han Solo are playable characters while C-3PO, R2-D2, and Obi-Wan Kenobi lend the occasional helping hand. Enemies include such nasties as Jawas, Banthas, Boba Fett, womp rats, and Stormtroopers.

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back

PUBLISHER: JVC. DEVELOPER: Lucasfilm/Sculptured Software. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1992.

The Empire Strikes Back follows the 1980 feature film fairly closely, giving players, as Luke Skywalker, the opportunity to: ride a Taun-Taun through the ice caverns of Hoth; look for Yoda and battle creatures on Dagobah; wield a blaster and a light saber; battle AT-AT Walkers while aboard a snow speeder (ala *Empire Strikes Back* for the Atari 2600); go to Cloud City; rescue Han Solo and Princess Leia; find and confront Darth Vader; and much more. Throughout the game, Luke can pick up icons for various force powers, including the ability to levitate, jump farther and higher, run faster, reflect enemy shots, and increase the power of the light saber and blaster. As in *Star Wars* for the NES, there's lots of platforming action. However, the shooting stages give the game plenty of variety.

Starship Hector

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Vertical Scrolling Shooter/Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Xevious fans should enjoy (or at least find something familiar in) *Starship Hector*, a typical top-down shooter. Players fly over land and sea, dropping bombs on ground-based targets and firing bullets at enemies that fly in zigzag patterns. However, unlike *Xevious*, *Starship Hector* includes horizontal levels in which the player's ship is viewed from the side (ala *Life Force*, which also features two perspectives). There are no weapon power-ups, unfortunately, but dropping bombs on certain structures releases items that can replenish the ship's health. The six levels are called "Histories," and at the end of each one is a boss, such as a battery of cannons, a giant statue, a golden pharaoh,

or a giant brain in a jar. Standard enemies include robots, trees, gun turrets, spaceships, and more.

StarTropics

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

StarTropics is similar to *The Legend of Zelda*, but is set in a tropical island paradise. Mike Jones comes to visit his uncle, but discovers that he has been kidnapped by aliens, sending the intrepid young man on an exotic adventure. In the overworld areas (viewed from a top-down perspective), Mike walks around talking to people or travels about via submarine. While in dungeons, Mike battles creatures, jumps over gaps (something not seen in *Zelda*), and opens doorways (by defeating certain creatures or jumping on buttons). Mike's primary weapon is a yoyo. Other weapons and items he can obtain include: a shooting star; a torch; a baseball bat; a sling-shot; a miracle mirror (for reflecting back magic shots); spiked shoes; a super laser; a magic anklet (for jumping further); a magic watch (for slowing or stopping enemies); and more. Includes battery backup. Originally packaged with a letter containing a vital secret code. Followed by: *Zoda's Revenge: StarTropics II* (NES).

Stealth ATF

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Imagineering. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1989.

This dated, but playable game puts players in the cockpit of a Stealth Advanced Tactical Fighter, performing barrel rolls, loops, dives, and banks, and firing cannons and missiles at enemy planes. To track an enemy, players should keep an eye on the radar scope. Indicators to monitor include altitude, fuel supply, heading, angle of attack, and damage sustained (the bottom half of the screen displays the control panel). Stealth mode (invisibility) can only be used once per mission, and after each mission there's a side-view landing sequence. An unusual two-player Dogfight

mode lets the second gamer assume control of the enemy plane closest to the center of the view screen. The game contains more than 100 missions around the globe.

Stinger

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Shooter/Vertical Scrolling
Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Featuring both horizontal and vertical scrolling (à la *Life Force*), *Stinger* has players piloting a jet fighter over land and sea through seven cute levels (oceans, the Arctic Circle, outer space, and the like) filled with such odd-ball enemies as radishes, donuts, footballs, clothes hangers, and vinyl records. Bosses include such characters as Sigmund Squidmund, Master Blaster (a boom box), and Solar B. Threeyes. The jet can fire cannons and drop bombs, and it can shoot clouds to release bells. Grabbing a bell earns bonus points, but bouncing the bell around by shooting it turns the bell different colors. A colored bell grants a power-up, such as speed, dual cannons, lasers, or a force field barrier. Other power-ups include three-way fire, five-way fire, and behind-the-jet shots. Like most Konami games, *Stinger* exudes playability. The two-player cooperative strategies are especially fun. Based on the 1983 Seibu Denshi arcade game.

Street Cop

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1989.

In *Street Cop*, players guide a rookie law enforcement officer through six areas (Park, Harlem, Warehouse, Construction Site, Downtown, and Business District), chasing after and arresting bad guys within a specified time limit. A radar map at the bottom of the screen helps players track the criminals. Unlike most games of its type, *Street Cop* requires the Nintendo Power Pad control mat, which is used for running (at three different speeds), jumping, turning corners, entering buildings, swinging a baton, squatting (both hands and feet must be pressed on the mat), and changing directions. Stepping on the pad also operates various items

players can find, including bombs, bullets, oranges (for throwing), turbo drinks (for running faster), hyper drinks (for temporary invincibility), dog whistles (for calling canine backup), and more.

Street Fighter 2010 — The Final Fight

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Street Fighter II fans will surely be disappointed with *Street Fighter 2010*, a difficult game that eschews the fighting genre the series is famous for in favor of cumbersome side-scrolling action. Players guide street fighter Ken as he runs, jumps, punches, kicks, and shoots his way through five different planets (including a post-apocalyptic Earth), each of which has aliens (plant monsters, skeletal fish, centipedes, cyborgs, and the like) and bosses to destroy. There are also walls to climb, annoying projectiles to avoid, ledges to grapple, and more. Gameplay is sluggish, the controls are unresponsive, and there's plenty of slowdown. Despite its title, the game has nothing to do with the popular *Final Fight* series.

Strider

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player.
1989.

Loosely based on Capcom's 1989 arcade game, *Strider* puts players in the title role, a running, jumping, hack-and-slash secret agent who wields a cipher (called a laser sword in the literally interpreted Sega Genesis version) and can obtain special boots and a variety of "power tricks," including warp and three types of projectile weapons: fire, spark, and spark ball. The foremost variances from the coin-op classic are the addition of keys and readable data disks, which are important for level progression. Backtracking is required, further separating the game from its arcade roots. The Master System version is a more straightforward port of the coin-op classic. Followed by: *Strider Returns: Journey from Darkness* (Genesis, Game Gear) and *Strider 2* (arcade, PlayStation).

Stunt Kids

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemasters. Motocross Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Sporting a side-view perspective, *Stunt Kids* has players racing their motorcycle through the Countryside, a Park, and a Construction Site, jumping on ramps and over rocks, brick walls, tree stumps, barrels, picnic tables, swings, and other obstacles. There are also coins and fruit to collect and frogs, snails, and other creatures to avoid, including a skateboarder named Menacing Mike. As in *Excitebike*, players can do wheelies and lower the front wheel, the latter of which makes for smooth landings on ramps (though *Excitebike* has better controls). Turbo boosts are used for extra speed. The one-player mode is a race against the clock while two-player action incorporates a split-screen perspective. Unlicensed.

Sunday Funday

PUBLISHER: Wisdom Tree. DEVELOPER: Wisdom Tree/Color Dreams. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1995.

The last U.S.-released NES cartridge, *Sunday Funday* is an altered rendition of *Menace Beach*. Instead of rescuing a sexy girl from Demon Dan, players must make it to the church on time. Enemies have been changed as well, such as replacing ninjas with young boys. Either way, prurient or pious, gameplay and graphics are mediocre at best. *Sunday Funday* does include a couple of mini-games not found in *Menace Beach*: Fishfall, in which players move a hand along the bottom of the screen, catching and throwing fish into a basket; and 4Him — The Ride, which is Christian karaoke. Unlicensed.

Super C

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

The sequel to *Contra*, *Super C* features the same type of brutally intense, run-and-gun gameplay, but adds a couple of vertical scrolling overhead stages to the mix (replacing the

behind-the-back levels from *Contra*). The alien warmonger Red Falcon has returned, forcing the Rambo-esque Scorpion and Mad Dog back into action. As players run, jump, flip, and shoot their way through Tropics of Torture, Massacre Mountains, Radioactive Lava Fields, and five other exciting levels, aliens will constantly attack. A machine gun that fires straight and diagonally is the standard weapon, but players can grab power-ups in the form of lasers, a flamethrower, rapid fire, barriers (for temporary invulnerability), mega shells, and the ever-popular spread gun. *Super C* is based on the arcade game *Super Contra* (Konami, 1988), with the title change made to avoid any connection to the real-life Iran-Contra scandal. *Super C* is less detailed graphically than its coin-op counterpart, but does feature three extra levels. Followed by: *Contra Force*.

Super Cars

PUBLISHER: Electro Brain. DEVELOPER: Electro Brain. Sports Car Racing/Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1991.

Viewed from overhead, *Super Cars* has players racing against other cars around twisting, turning, scrolling streets. The tracks consist of straights, tunnels, bridges, oil slicks, dirt piles, U-turns, and right-angle turns and are lined with barriers to keep drivers away from the grass, rocks, and trees. Gameplay evokes *Super Sprint*, but is more elaborate as players can enter garages to spend earned money on fuel, repairs, power steering, turbo chargers (increases acceleration), high speed kits (increases maximum speed), retro (makes fast breaking easier), anti spin (points your car in the right direction after spinouts), side armor (for bumping into other cars), and front and rear missiles (for shooting other cars). Missiles are limited to one per race. Completing a season of nine races advances players to the next difficulty level. Includes password feature.

Super Dodge Ball

PUBLISHER: CSG Imagesoft. DEVELOPER: Technos. Sports/Dodge Ball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

This 8-bit take on the popular sport that traumatized many a school kid pits Team U.S.A.

against seven international squads. The six-on-six action is viewed from the side, and players can walk, run, pass, duck, throw (including super throws called “power shots”), catch, and jump, making for a rousing good time. Three modes of play are available: World Cup, Versus, and Bean Ball, the latter of which is a simple game of one-on-one. Varied backgrounds and *River City Ransom*-like characters add to the fun. The original arcade version of *Super Dodge Ball* (Technos, 1987) has smoother graphics and less flickering, but the home rendition remains a distinct, if somewhat sadistic, pleasure.

Super Glove Ball

PUBLISHER: Mattel. DEVELOPER: Rare. Sports/Futuristic/Ball-and-Paddle, 1 player. 1990.

Borrowing elements of *Breakout* and handball, *Super Glove Ball* has players moving a robotic hand around a pseudo-3D playfield (viewed from a first-person perspective), hitting and punching energy balls at tiles, blocks, tubes, and an assortment of enemies, including rocket bullets, stone sharks, and kamikaze barnacles. Hitting certain items unleashes robo-bullets, bomb balls, ice balls, and other weapons and power-ups while knocking out an entire wall lets players advance to the next room. The game supports Nintendo's Power Glove, with the onscreen glove echoing the movements of the infamous peripheral.

Super Jeopardy!

PUBLISHER: GameTek. DEVELOPER: GameTek. Game Show, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Preceded by *Jeopardy!*, *Jeopardy! Junior Edition*, and *Jeopardy! 25th Anniversary Edition*, all of which were similar in design to one another, *Super Jeopardy!* ups the NES ante with a variety of new features, including: four-player action (with or without multi-player adapter); digitized voice effects; better graphics; password codes for entering the Final Round; and an actual game show host (though it's not Alex Trebek). There are almost 2,000 new trivia questions, spread among such categories as Oregon, Chemistry, Medicine, Proverbs, The '60s, Planets, and World War II. As in previous editions, players must guide a cur-

sor around an alphabet to spell out the answers to questions (actually, as *Jeopardy!* fans know, the questions are posed as answers while the answers take the form of questions). The computer provides the intro to the answers given, such as “who is” and “what is.”

Super Mario Bros.

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1985.

One of the best, most influential video games of all time, *Super Mario Bros.* changed the industry forever. Players guide the titular Italian plumber (or his brother Luigi) through eight surprise-filled worlds of the fabled Mushroom Kingdom, jumping on such quirky characters as Koopa Troopas (turtles), Little Goombas (mushrooms), and The Hammer Brothers (twin turtles) while avoiding Buzzy Beetles, Piranha plants, bottomless pits, and more. Fire flowers, Starman, and magic mushroom power-ups enable Mario to become Fiery Mario (who can shoot fireballs), Invincible Mario, or Super Mario (who can shatter bricks by head-bumping them from below). The goal is to rescue the Mushroom Princess from the evil Bowser. Expansive levels, collectable coins, excellent controls, hidden areas, delightful graphics and sounds, unprecedented freedom of side-scrolling movement, and many other attributes make *Super Mario Bros.* a bona fide classic.

Super Mario Bros./Duck Hunt

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Side-Scrolling Platform/Light Gun Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

Packaged with the NES Action Set, this exceedingly common game features two NES favorites in one cartridge: *Super Mario Bros.* and *Duck Hunt*, both of which were originally released in 1985.

Super Mario Bros./Duck Hunt/World Class Track Meet

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo/Bandai. Side-Scrolling Platform/Light Gun Shooter/Sports/Track & Field, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1988.

Packaged with the NES Power Set (which also included the Power Pad and the Zapper light gun), this game features three NES favorites in one cartridge: *Super Mario Bros.*, *Duck Hunt*, and *World Class Track Meet*, the latter of which is the re-release of Bandai's *Stadium Events*.

Super Mario Bros. 2

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

The U.S. sequel to *Super Mario Bros.*, *SMB2* is basically the same game as *Yumekejo Doki Doki Panic* for the Famicom (the Japanese NES), but the Arabian hero has been dropped in favor of Mario characters. Players guide Mario, Luigi, Toad, and/or Princess Toadstool through seven vast worlds, battling such odd-

ball creatures as Tweeters, Snifits, Ninjis, Beezozs, and Phantos. Instead of jumping on enemies like in *SMB*, the primary method of doing battle is to pick up (or pull up) items—including the enemies themselves—and throw them. Other differences include: magic potions for creating doorways to sub-spaces; keys for opening standard doors; a slot machine bonus game for winning extra lives; and mushroom blocks that players can pick up, move, and stand on. Although not as beloved as its progenitor, *Super Mario Bros. 2* is a fun and challenging game.

Super Mario Bros. 3

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1990.

One of the most eagerly anticipated video games ever released, *Super Mario Bros. 3* is also one of the best (and best selling) games for any console. Basic gameplay is similar to the original *Super Mario Bros.*, but lots of new features have been added, including: a world map screen; a sliding attack; mini-games (including a memory match card game); an inventory system for power-ups; and various suits that enable Mario to turn into Raccoon Mario (fly, tail attack), Frog Mario (swim faster), or Tanooki Mario (fly, turn into statue). Also included is Battle Mode, which is a special version of the arcade classic, *Mario Bros.* Packaged with the NES Challenge Set (after the game had been sold individually for some time), *Super Mario Bros. 3* was featured prominently in *The Wizard* (1989), which was essentially a feature-length commercial for the game and for the ill-fated Nintendo Power Glove. Followed by: *Super Mario World* (SNES), *New Super Mario Bros.* (Nintendo DS), and other sequels and offshoots.



Two legendary NES favorites: *Super Mario Bros.* and *Super Mario Bros. 2*, both complete with box, cartridge, and instruction manual.

Super Pitfall

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1987.

A sequel to *Pitfall!* and *Pitfall II: Lost Caverns*, *Super Pitfall* for the NES is similar to the latter game, but nowhere near as good as either Atari 2600 classic. In fact, thanks to a clumsy lead character, terrible music, ugly graphics, and generic level design, it's downright awful. Throughout the game's 270 screens, Pitfall Harry climbs ladders, jumps over pitfalls, explores caverns, ducks under enemies, transports to other areas (via jumping at particular unmarked spots), swims subterranean lakes, swings on ropes, and shoots frogs, vultures, snakes, bats, and cavemen. Items to find, such as coded crystals for unlocking doors, are invisible, so Harry should jump frequently throughout the caverns in order to find said items. Followed by: *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure* (various), *Pitfall: Beyond the Jungle* (Game Boy Color), *Pitfall: The Big Adventure* (Nintendo Wii), and other sequels and offshoots.

Super Spike V'Ball

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Technos. Sports/Volleyball, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on the Technos arcade game from 1988 (which was released under the titles *V'Ball* and *U.S. Championship V'Ball*), *Super Spike V'Ball* is a two-on-two volleyball game that fans of *Kings of the Beach* will enjoy. Up to four players select from four different muscle bound teams (including Billy and Jimmy of *Double Dragon* fame), each varying according to such attributes as speed and spiking power. An X on the ground indicates where the ball will land, and players automatically dive for balls that are just out of reach. To do a super spike, gamers must press the B button three times while the player is in the air. The elevated view is from the side, and the screens scrolls a bit to the right and left. Naturally, the arcade game has richer, more distinguishable graphics (each team in the NES game looks like twins), but this is a nice coin-op conversion nevertheless. Multi-tap adapter compatible.

Super Spike V'Ball/Nintendo World Cup

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Technos. Sports/Volleyball/Soccer, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Super Spike V'Ball/Nintendo World Cup was the pack-in cartridge with the Nintendo Entertainment Sports Set, which included the NES console, the NES Satellite four-player adapter, and four controllers. Both games were also released separately on their own cartridge.

Super Sprint

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Viewed from overhead, *Super Sprint* for the NES does a solid job covering the basics of Atari's 1986 arcade game (which did benefit from steering wheel/gas pedal controls). Players race their tiny little car around seven twisting, turning, non-scrolling tracks, dodging obstacles (oil slicks, tornadoes, water puddles, and mud puddles) while trying to beat three other cars. Two new obstacles (exploding cones and hydraulic poles) have been introduced, and the NES control pad works fine in steering the cars, but the game is missing certain elements found in the coin-op classic, including a three-player mode, selectable tracks, and helicopter flyovers. In addition, the Winner's Circle screen has been simplified, and the graphics are less detailed (there are fewer trees and no spectators, for example). Overall, this is a fun, yet simple racer that fans of old-school gaming will appreciate. Part of the *Sprint* series, which began in the arcades during the 1970s, *Super Sprint* spawned a coin-op sequel: *Championship Sprint*. Unlicensed.

Super Spy Hunter

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Demolition/Combat Racing, 1 player. 1992.

Not to be confused with *Spy Hunter II* (the arcade sequel to *Spy Hunter*), *Super Spy Hunter* is an NES exclusive (and a highly enjoyable one at that). As in the original *Spy Hunter*, the game is viewed from overhead, but the player's car, which is now futuristic in nature, shoots three-

way spread fire and can jump ramps. Instead of entering vans to procure additional weaponry, players must destroy weapons vehicles to augment their firepower. New weapons include rapid fire, a computer (for aiming), a tire slasher, super bombs, an autonomous cannon, and more. In addition, there are actual bosses (armored transport, magnetic destroyer, super turret terminator, and the like) and levels: Aquapolis, Desert of Doom, Hazardous Detour, Collapsible Canyon, Amphibious/Aerial Assault, and Weapons Factory. Once again, gamers will occasionally drive a boat, but *Super Spy Hunter* features an airplane as well.

Super Team Games

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Bandai.
Sports/Exercise, 1–6 players (simultaneous).
1988.

Designed for Nintendo's Power Pad control mat, *Super Team Games* lets players compete in eight competitions: Log Hop, Belly Bump Ball, Water Cross, Crab Walk, Wall Jump, Bubble Run, Skateboard Race, 6 Legged Race, Tug of War, and Relay Race. To get the onscreen competitors to perform such actions as run, jump over obstacles, bump a ball, ride a skateboard, and pull a rope, players must run, jump, step, and place their hands on the large round spots on the aforementioned mat. The action is viewed from the side, and the contestants are short-legged boys wearing bands over their big heads. One of few video games that give players a good aerobic workout, *Super Team Games* is as fun as it is healthy.

Superman

PUBLISHER: Kemco/Seika. DEVELOPER: First Star Software. Adventure/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1988.

Storming onto the scene in *Action Comics* #1 (1938), Superman was the first bona fide super-hero. Unfortunately, *Superman* for the NES fails miserably in all reviewable categories, as though it were trying purposefully to soil the Man of Steel's storied heritage. Superman's job here is to stop crime in Metropolis, culminating in boss battles against Lex Luthor, Ursa, Non, and General Zod. Superman can jump,

punch, and execute a variety of his far-famed (if watered down here) powers: x-ray vision, super spin, heat vision, super breath, and super flight, each selectable from an inventory screen. Egregious flaws abound, from boring flight sequences (where Supes flies to his next mission) to punches that connect when Superman's fist is a good inch away from the enemy to the short, squatty, clumsily animated characters. Preceded by *Superman* for the Atari 2600, this was the second console game to feature the DC Comics icon.

Swamp Thing

PUBLISHER: THQ Software. DEVELOPER: Imaginering. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player.
1992.

With this release for the NES, the nuance, horror, and sophisticated storytelling of DC Comics' *Swamp Thing* has been reduced to a mediocre (if playable) platformer, complemented by some fairly attractive cut scenes. Swampy trudges through eight dark, dreary levels (Swamp, Skull Village, Graveyard, Chemical Factory, Dark Forest, Junkyard, Toxic Dump, and Arcane's Lab), jumping over, punching, or throwing sludge balls at robots, snakes, skeletons, knives, and other enemies and obstacles. *Swamp Thing* can't duck and punch simultaneously, causing some frustration. DC devotees who like to fire up their NES from time to time should stick with *Batman*.

Sword Master

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Athena.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

As with many games of its type, *Sword Master* puts players in the role of a sword-bearing warrior, walking along battling enemies (skeletons, bats, giants, sorcerers, dragons, knights, wolves, and the like), ducking under enemy fire, and jumping over gaps and onto platforms (including double jumps). Setting it apart from the pack, however, is the strategic necessity of a shield, which blocks enemy attacks and projectiles. In addition, the game has a gorgeous introductory sequence and some surprisingly sophisticated parallax scrolling. While working his way through the seven levels

of forests, castles, and dungeons, the warrior will get the opportunity to use four types of magic: bullets (from a cane), flash attacks, fireballs, and bombs. Killing certain enemies increases experience points or releases health potions. Similar to: *Trojan* (NES).

Swords and Serpents

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Interplay. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1, 2, or 4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

In *Swords and Serpents*, a party of one, two, or four players must brave a 16-level dungeon filled with monsters, weapons (swords, staffs, daggers, and the like), magic spells (such as heal, thunder, flash fire, stun, and flight), armor, and more. The objective is to recover the treasures of the fabled Ruby Warrior and defeat an evil serpent that has been terrorizing the land. Defeating enemies via turn-based battles earns players experience and gold. Players can customize their own heroes or use the pre-generated party consisting of three character classes: warrior, thief, and magician, each rated according to strength, intelligence, agility, hit points, and magic points. Zoom tubes let players retreat quickly to places they have already been, and an auto-mapping system helps gamers track their progress. Similar to: *Wizardry* (NES).

T&C Surf Designs: Thrilla's Surfari

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1992.

The sequel to *T&C Surf Designs: Wood & Water Rage*, *Thrilla's Surfari* abandons the extreme sports angle of the first game in favor of platforming action. As Thrilla Gorilla, players must skateboard (or surf, depending on the level) through lush, beautifully rendered jungles of Africa. Locales to traverse and obstacles to jump over include rivers, deserts, waterfalls, oceans, trees, logs, boulders, and more. Standard enemies, such as electric eels, rhinos, and cobras, can be jumped on, and players can throw coconuts at the bosses. This is a fast and fun game with gorgeous graphics, cool music, high jumps, and responsive controls. It wears its age extremely well.

T&C Surf Designs: Wood & Water Rage

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Enteractive. Sports/Skating/Surfing, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

T&C Surf Designs: Wood & Water Rage puts players in the role of Joe Cool or Tiki Man, skateboarding down the street, scoring points by jumping ramps, grinding along guard rails, and jumping on turtles and toy cars. Hazards include cracks, rolling oil drums, baseballs and more. The surfing part of the game lets players, as Thrilla Gorilla or Kool Kat, brave the Big Wave Encounter, trying to stay up on the board while collecting bananas. The *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* series for the PS2 and other modern consoles has made *Wood & Water Rage* feel hopeless outdated (certain genres age better than others), but the game is certainly playable, especially for NES owners willing to overlook redundant graphics and music. The title of this game refers to surfboard retailer Town & Country Surf Designs.

Taboo: The Sixth Sense

PUBLISHER: Tradewest. DEVELOPER: Rare. Fortune Teller Simulator, 1 player. 1989.

Taboo is a nonsensical, slowly paced tarot card “game” in which players enter their name, birth date, gender, and a question about the future. An oracle then gives the player a 10-card reading, which consists of such vague answers as “Your present position is a possible journey or travel or a need to flee from reality” or “Your near term goal or destiny is influenced by great determination.” After the final card has been revealed, the computer will give the player lucky numbers. The screen depicts text, cards, and simple static images.

Tag Team Wrestling

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Data East. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Based on the 1984 Data East arcade game (but with simplified graphics and a few missing moves), *Tag Team Wrestling* was the first wrestling title for the NES. The game is dated, as evidenced by its odd (if workable) control technique. Once a wrestler has grabbed his op-

ponent, the player must quickly cycle through a list in order to select the desired move. Wrestling moves include: body slam, drop kick, body attack, back drop, neck hanging, back breaker, flying headbutt, ring post, sasori gatame, western lariat, brain buster, and enzui giri. By leaving the ring, wrestlers can acquire weapons. Wrestlers low on energy or caught in an unbreakable hold can call on a partner for help. The elevated view of the non-scrolling ring is from the side.

Tagin' Dragon

PUBLISHER: Bunch Games. DEVELOPER: Sachen. Maze, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Viewed from overhead, *Tagin' Dragon* is old-school all the way, with gamers essentially playing tag with a bunch of dragons (hence the odd title). Players guide their dragon around a series of timed, *Bomberman*-like mazes (each marked by square-shaped bushes, permanent blocks, time zones, and ice zones), trying to bite the tail of the other dragon(s) in the maze while avoiding getting bit. Time zones are lethal if stayed in too long while ice zones make the player's dragon go faster. Grabbing a magic lantern clears out the bushes to reveal bonus items (for extra points) while snatching up eggs gives players extra lives. Modes of play include: Player vs. 3 Dragons, Both Players vs. 3 Dragons, and Player vs. Player. Similar to: *Jungler* (arcade, Arcadia 2001), but not as good. Unlicensed.

TaleSpin

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

One of the lesser Disney-based Capcom games, *TaleSpin* puts Baloo Bear at the helm of his flying Mini Sea-Duck. The Sea-Duck is an unusual vehicle for a side-scrolling shooter in that it can hover, fly upside down, and turn around, which is useful for backtracking and grabbing items, some of which are revealed by shooting balloons, walls, clouds, and buildings. Initially, the Sea-Duck can only fire one cannonball at a time, but collecting money bags earns cash for purchasing rapid shots (as well as extra lives, armor, speed, and continues). In

addition to shooting air pirates, Baloo must avoid bubbles, baseballs, ghosts, falling steel beams, and other obstacles. Levels include: Over the Sea, Baseball Stadium, In the Stormy Sky, Haunted House, High Above the City, Mining Tunnels, Jungle Junket, and Snowy Alps. Hidden bonus rounds feature Kit Cloud-kicker riding his airfoil, popping balloons, and flying through fruit. Much different than the Genesis and Turbografx-16 games of the same name, which are primarily platformers.

Target: Renegade

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

The sequel to *Renegade* (NES), *Target: Renegade* has a more conventional control scheme than its progenitor, and a few interesting features have been taken out, including the ability to throw enemies and punch them while they are down. The motorcycle riding action and two-player mode have been removed as well. Redundant gameplay consists of kicking (including flying kicks and foot sweeps) and punching gangsters, bikers, thugs, and other bad guys. As in the superior *Double Dragon*, players can knock knives and other weapons out of enemy hands and use them. There are seven different battlegrounds spread over five areas: Parking Garage, Downtown, Park, Uptown, and Pig Pen (a gang hideout where Renegade must face his archenemy).

Tecmo Baseball

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Although not as famous as its football counterpart (*Tecmo Bowl*), *Tecmo Baseball* is a solid rendition of America's favorite pastime. The game can be played in Standard or All-Star mode, and with or without the DH rule. The behind-the-pitcher viewpoint allows for large players, and, like most baseball video games, the perspective changes to overhead once the ball has been hit. Pitchers can select from four different throws: normal, fast ball, curve ball, and breaking ball. There are 14 squads (for a total of 280 players), each named after a U.S. city, but player names are generic. Other features

include: bunts, steals, tagging up, pinch hitting, and relief pitching. Includes password feature and voice effects. Followed by: *Tecmo Super Baseball* (Genesis, SNES).

Tecmo Bowl

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Many gamers consider *Tecmo Bowl* to be the first truly great football cartridge. Though it lacks a number of realistic features, such as fumbles, onside kicks, and touchbacks, it does offer fun, fast-paced action and detailed, nicely animated graphics. Controls are simple, and each of the game's 12 teams is given four different plays to run. The teams are based on their NFL counterparts, but lack mascot names, and rosters include such stars as Dan Marino, Jerry Rice, and John Elway. When compared to its 1987 arcade counterpart, *Tecmo Bowl* for the NES has a number of differences, including nine-player teams (as opposed to 10) and the lack of a jump button (though players can break tackles and make diving tackles). Also released for the Game Boy. Followed by: *Tecmo Bowl II* (arcade) and *Tecmo Super Bowl* (NES, Genesis, SNES, PlayStation).

Tecmo Cup Soccer Game

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Sports/Soccer, 1 player. 1993.

Unlike the more popular *Tecmo Bowl*, which put Tecmo on the proverbial map, the relatively obscure *Tecmo Cup Soccer Game* eschews standard sports action in favor of something altogether different: a sports RPG, complete with storyline (involving the son of a famous soccer player) and the leveling up of characters. Such soccer staples as dribbling, shooting, passing, stealing, and penalty kicks are included, but they are selected from text-based menus on the bottom half of the screen and displayed via cutscene-like animations on the top half of the screen. The game includes two modes of play (National Tournament and Tecmo Cup), 12 different teams, and 18 different characters. Based on the Japanese anime series *Captain Tsubasa* (which was what the Famicom version of the game was called). Includes password feature.

Tecmo NBA Basketball

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Though less well-known than *Tecmo Bowl*, *Tecmo NBA Basketball* is a features-rich hoops title with equal parts simulation and arcade-style action. Viewed from an elevated side-view perspective, the five-on-five gameplay includes: all 27 NBA teams of the era; battery-backed team and player statistics; callable offensive plays; and 324 players, including Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, David Robinson, Charles Barkley, and other greats, each rated according to speed, jumping, stealing, blocking, shooting range, and stamina. The game also features time-outs, overtime, injuries, fouls, substitutions, and much more. Game modes include: Preseason, Regular Season, and All Star Game. *Double Dribble* remains the most fondly remembered basketball title for the NES, but *Tecmo NBA Basketball*, despite heavy flickering, deserves some degree of recognition. Followed by: *Tecmo Super NBA Basketball* (Genesis, SNES).

Tecmo Super Bowl

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Tecmo Super Bowl improves upon the already great *Tecmo Bowl* with better graphics and more plays (including offensive and defensive playbooks). There are 30 players per team, each rated according to speed, power, and other attributes. Gamers can experience the entire 1991 NFL season using any of the 28 NFL teams. Other features and options include: Coach vs. Coach mode, Pro Bowl games, coin tosses, substitutions, the ability to break tackles, and more. Unlike *Tecmo Bowl*, which consists of nine-on-nine action, *Tecmo Super Bowl* lets each team field 11 onscreen players (with some minor flickering and zero slowdown). Includes battery backup. Followed by: *Tecmo Bowl II: Special Edition* (Genesis, SNES), *Tecmo Bowl III: Final Edition* (Genesis, SNES), and *Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff* (Nintendo DS).

Tecmo World Wrestling

PUBLISHER: Tecmo. DEVELOPER: Tecmo. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Thanks to an involving control scheme, more than 30 graphically impressive moves (pile driver, shoulder throw, power slam, and the like), and the ability to train (by pressing the A button rapidly) between matches to gain strength and endurance, *Tecmo World Wrestling* is an influential game that fans of the sport should enjoy. Ten fictional wrestlers are available, and players can climb ropes, slam their opponent's head into posts, pick up their opponent, and fight outside of the ring. Unfortunately, there are no tournament or tag team modes.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Combat/Adventure, 1 player.
1989.

Based on the pizza-loving heroes of comic book, movie, and cartoon fame, *TMNT* for the NES lets players select from any of the titular tortoises. Michelangelo wields nunchakus; Raphael fights with a sai; Donatello battles using a bow; and Leonardo carries a katana blade. The characters are uneven in terms of ability, and the stages themselves—sewers, warehouses, the streets of New York, and the like—are uneven in terms of difficulty. The side-scrolling combat areas are complemented by an overhead view stage (drive the Turtle van around maze-like streets, shooting other vehicles) and a swimming stage. The famous theme song is absent, but the turtles will encounter the following familiar faces: Beebop, Rocksteady, Foot Clan soldiers, Shredder, April O'Neil, and Splinter.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II — The Arcade Game

PUBLISHER: Ultra Games. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Despite relatively minor graphical simplifications and the absence of a four-player mode, this is an excellent port of Konami's coin-op classic, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1990). It even features two new levels and some additional enemies, including a flying rendition of Baxter Stockman. Other enemies

include Frosty the Hitman, Roadkill Rodney, Stone Warriors, Foot Soldiers, and more. Gameplay is somewhat similar to *Double Dragon*, with players running, jumping, and attacking (with katana blades, sai daggers, nunchakus, or a bow, depending on the turtle selected) their way through seven levels, including Snowy Central Park, Time Square, and the SoHo Sewer System. *TMNT II* is less varied than *TMNT* for the NES (which was not based on an arcade game), but more enjoyable.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III — The Manhattan Project

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

As with the first two games in the series, the excellent *TMNT III* lets players control each of the famous ninjitsu-trained, anthropomorphic turtles. However, this time out they each have their own moves (in addition to their own weaponry). Leonardo has a cyclone sword spin; Raphael a power drill attack; Michelangelo a kangaroo kick; and Donatello a knockout roll. Standard moves include flying flip jump, flying ninja kick, jab & toss, and get loose (for shaking free of a biting Mouser or an arms-pinning Foot Soldier). The fantastic foursome must run, jump, and battle their way through eight levels: Ft. Slaughterdale Beach, The Typhoon Tidal Pool, Brooklyn Bridge is Falling Down, Welcome to the Jungle (garages, subways, alleys), The Sewer Pipe Nightmare, The Technodrome, Vertigo Point Tower, and Krang's Spaceship.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles — Tournament Fighters

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Fighting, 1–4 players (2-player simultaneous). 1994.

Tournament Fighters eschews the side-scrolling formula of the first three games in the *TMNT* series in favor of one-on-one, *Street Fighter II*-style fighting (an unusual genre for the NES done surprisingly well here). In Story mode, players select a turtle for use in fighting Casey Jones, Hot Head, Shredder, and the other

three turtles. VS Player and VS CPU let gamers select any character for battling a friend or the computer (respectively) while Tournament mode lets one to four players (two at a time) fight as any of the seven characters. Each combatant has a variety of punches and kicks, along with such special moves as fire breath, explosion punch, tornado spinning kick, or heel drop. Curiously, the turtles lack their patented weaponry. A late NES release, *Tournament Fighters* was also produced for the Genesis and SNES, but with a different mix of characters.

10-Yard Fight

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Irem.
Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1985.

Viewed from overhead, this football cartridge is based on the 1984 Taito arcade game (in which the gamer only played on offense), but has sluggish gameplay and somewhat less detailed graphics (the players' helmets lack stripes, for example). The quarterback appears in shotgun formation and can run, pass, or toss the ball to one of two running backs. Unfortunately, passes are easily intercepted. Shaking off would-be tacklers is a big part of the game and a maneuver the coin-op version handled better thanks to joystick control. On defense, gamers control a single player (a safety, linebacker, or corner) that can pull off a fairly ridiculous flying tackle maneuver. Five difficulty levels are available, and there are no penalties. A system launch title, *10-Yard Fight* has not aged well. NES football fans should stick with *Tecmo Bowl* or *Tecmo Super Bowl*.

Tennis

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo.
Sports/Tennis, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1985.

A system launch title, *Tennis* is a nice upgrade from most tennis games for previous consoles, giving players a relatively authentic version of the popular sport. Viewed from behind (and a little above) the court, the game offers five skill levels, all the main rules of standard tennis, and two game modes: Singles and Doubles. Types of hits include smash, backward

smash, forehand, backhand, volley, lob, and serve. The first player to win six games wins the set while winning two out of three sets wins the match. Interestingly, Mario sits perched atop the official's chair, turning his head back and forth, calling the game via word balloons. Years later, with such releases as *Mario's Tennis* (Virtual Boy, 1995) and *Mario Tennis* (Nintendo 64, 2000), Nintendo got smart and began featuring the famous Italian plumber as a playable character.

The Terminator

PUBLISHER: Mindscape. DEVELOPER: Radical Entertainment. Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the 1984 feature film, *The Terminator* for the NES puts players in the role of Kyle Reese, who must journey back to our time to protect Sarah Connor, mother of John Connor, future leader of the resistance movement against the machines. Reese starts off in the future (a departure from the movie), trying to find Skynet's time displacement equipment in order to follow The Terminator back to 1984. Other objectives include: finding Sarah and escaping from the police station; escaping from a motorcycle-riding Terminator; destroying The Terminator under a compressor; and more. Reese spends a lot of time on foot, running, jumping, climbing ladders, and shooting Terminators, but he will also drive a truck (side-scrolling) and a getaway vehicle (overhead view). In certain areas, Reese is without a gun, meaning he must punch, kick, and throw baseballs at enemies. Similar to the SNES version (sans brass knuckles, bullet proof vests, and certain other features), but much different than the Genesis and Sega CD renditions (which lack driving stages).

Terminator 2: Judgment Day

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

An advanced, shape-shifting Terminator called the T-1000 is trying to kill a 10-year-old John Connor, and it is up to players, in the role of a reprogrammed T-800 (played by Arnold

Schwarzenegger in the 1991 feature film), to save him. Armed with a 10-gauge shotgun and the ability to run, jump, kneel, punch, and ride elevators, players must: rescue Sarah Connor from the state hospital (without killing human opponents); destroy Cyberdyne Systems (by setting charges and moving 10 barrels of explosives to various sections of a building); battle the T-1000 atop a steel mill; and more. Level two deviates from the other four levels by putting the T-800 on a Harley, driving through a drainage canal (viewed from an angled perspective), avoiding obstacles and debris while shooting openings in gates and shooting and outracing the T-1000, who gives chase in a big-rig tow truck. Much different than the Genesis and SNES versions of the game.

Terra Cresta

PUBLISHER: Vik Tokai. DEVELOPER: Nihon Bussan. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

A nice port of Nihon Bussan's 1985 arcade game, *Terra Cresta* for the NES is similar to *Xenvious* (fly over land and sea, firing at airborne and ground-based enemies), but adds to the

formula by letting players reveal and collect five different ship parts. The parts in question boost the size and weapons power of the player's ship, such as dual firing, spread fire, or the addition of a tail gun. Collecting all five parts temporarily transforms the ship into an invulnerable phoenix, which can crash into enemies with impunity. A special Design mode lets players predetermine how the added weapons fly out from the ship. Enemies to destroy include dragons, devils, mines, high-speed boats, floatable guard guns, moveable fortresses, and more. *Terra Cresta* is the sequel to the slide-and-shoot coin-op classic, *Moon Cresta* (Nichibutsu, 1980).

Tetris (Nintendo)

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Action Puzzle, 1 player. 1989.

A port of Alexey Pazhitnov's famous computer game, *Tetris* for the NES has players manipulating seven different types of blocks that fall, one at a time, down the playfield. The blocks can be rotated and moved right and left. The objective is to piece them together to form horizontal lines. When an unbroken line is formed, it disappears, clearing up space. If the

blocks pile up to the top of the screen, the game will end. Clearing two to four rows at once gives players extra points. Mode A is an endurance test in which players try to complete as many lines as possible while mode B is a contest to complete 25 lines. *Tetris* is great in most any form, but the Nintendo version lacks the two-player simultaneous mode found in the Tengen rendition. *Tetris* was ported to numerous other systems and spawned countless imitators and sequels, including *Tetris Attack* (Game Boy, SNES), *The Next Tetris* (PlayStation), and *Tetris Worlds* (various).



Although it lacks the two-player simultaneous mode of the Tengen version, the Nintendo rendition of *Tetris* for the NES is nevertheless an excellent port of the popular computer game.

Tetris (Tengen)

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Although forced off the market due to a Nintendo lawsuit (making the game somewhat hard to find), “Tengen Tetris” (as it is frequently called) is superior to its Nintendo-produced counterpart. Similar to the *Tetris* arcade game (Atari, 1988), the Tengen version offers two-player split screen action (cooperative or competitive). Players can even handicap games or play against the computer. Objectives include achieving the highest score or racing to eliminate a set number of lines, with or without a time limit. Graphically, the blocks are shaded like their arcade counterparts. In the Nintendo version, the blocks appear flat.

Tetris 2

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

Tetris 2 is a cross of sorts between *Tetris* and *Columns*, with fixed blocks and flash blocks (which are already on the screen as play begins) thrown in for good measure. As in *Tetris*, formations of blocks fall from the top to the bottom of the screen, and players must maneuver the blocks in order to make them disappear. However, unlike *Tetris* (and more like *Columns*), the blocks come in three colors (red, green, and yellow), and the job is to align three or more blocks of the same color vertically or horizontally. Eliminating a flash block makes all blocks of the same color vanish, and eliminating all flash blocks advances the game to the next level. In two-player split-screen mode, eliminating flash blocks makes the other player’s ceiling drop down one line. In addition, creating chain reactions makes the other player’s blocks fall faster. The SNES version of *Tetris 2* trumps this rendition with sharper graphics and a Puzzle mode. Also released for the Game Boy.

3-D WorldRunner

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Square. Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

With its behind-the-runner perspective, *3-D WorldRunner* (which is also known as *The 3-D Battles of WorldRunner*) is something of a *Space Harrier* clone, but with much more jump-

ing involved. Players run through eight alien worlds, leaping over large chasms, dodging flaming towers, and firing missiles at serpent beasts and their minions (including robot heads, roving hands, dog faces, mean TVs, and seashells). Power-ups to grab include invincibility, higher jumping ability, bonus level warps, and more. Mushrooms should be avoided, however, as they are poisonous. The game comes packaged with special glasses, which give the already colorful visuals a rich, surprisingly clear, 3D look. Fans of *Space Harrier 3-D* for the Master System should enjoy *3-D WorldRunner*.

The Three Stooges

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Beam Software. Multi-Genre Game, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

Ruthless banker I. Fleecem has threatened to foreclose on Ma’s orphanage, and it is up to Larry, Moe, and Curly to raise enough money to save the day. What this amounts to is a collection of mini-games: The Cracker Eating Contest (Curly scoops up crackers before oysters can eat them); Help Wanted: Doctors (race up hospital corridors, grabbing medical supplies); Help Wanted: Waiters (a classic pie fight); The Boxing Match (Larry runs along a side-scrolling sidewalk, dodging obstacles, trying to bring back a “Pop Goes the Weasel”-playing radio so Curly can beat the champ); The Slapping Game (Moe slaps, pokes, punches, and kicks Larry and Curly); and Three Stooges Trivia. Fans of the comedy trio will recognize famous scenes from various Stooges short films, and the game uses digitized graphics and authentic voice effects. Based on the 1987 computer game. Also released for the Game Boy Advance and PlayStation.

Thunder & Lightning

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Romstar. Ball-and-Paddle, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1991.

Like *Arkanoid*, *Thunder & Lightning* takes the *Breakout* concept — rebound a ball off a paddle and into a wall near the top of the screen in order to make it disappear one brick at a

time — and adds levels (30), power-ups, and enemies (such as birds and turtles in this case). Unlike *Arkanoid* and *Breakout*, *Thunder & Lightning* has two-player simultaneous action, square bricks (as opposed to rectangular), and a guy named Mr. Chin, who carries the paddle along the bottom of the screen. Power-ups include: glove (for catching the ball); missile (for firing missiles at the bricks); slow (for slowing down the ball); big (gives the ball the ability to go through any brick); 1-Up (extra life); long (increases the length of the paddle); three-way multi-shot (splits the ball into three separate balls); and six-way multi-shot (splits the ball into six separate balls). Based on Seta's 1990 arcade game.

Thunderbirds

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Pack-In-Video. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Based on Gerry Anderson's British television series (circa 1960s), which employed a form of puppetry called "Supermarionation," *Thunderbirds* for the NES is a fairly standard shooter, but fans of the show will appreciate the nostalgic kick of seeing the marionettes communicating in the introductory sequence and during certain points throughout the game. Players pilot five different ships (one at a time, of course) over North America, Asia, and the Indian Ocean, dodging asteroids and other obstacles while blasting away at such enemies as bombers, fighter jets, fireballs, gun turrets, mines, boats, and fish. Destroying certain enemies unleashes power-ups, including orbiters, energy (weaponry upgrades), and health. Certain areas require players to blast through rocky terrain.

Thundercade

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: American Sammy. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Instead of the standard-for-the-genre airplane or spaceship, *Thundercade* features a combat motorcycle, which cruises up the screen, firing a machine gun at soldiers, tanks, jets, submarines, and other enemies. The motorcy-

cle automatically jumps over water, inclines, and hills and can equip sidecar power-ups consisting of a chain gun and five types of cannons. When things get tough, players can call on a B-7 bomber to provide air support. There are four levels of play: City, Base, Woodland, and Fortress, culminating in the destruction of an atomic power plant. This is a nice (if visually downgraded) port of Taito's fun, action-packed arcade game (1987).

Tiger-Heli

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

In *Tiger-Heli*, players fly a stealth jetcopter over land and sea in the fictional terrorist-run country of Cantun, firing missiles (which appear in horizontal groupings of four) at anything and everything, including railroad gates, trailers, gas tanks, stop signs, buildings, cars, trains, trucks, tents, aircraft, gunboats, gun batteries, tanks, and all-terrain attack modules. Shooting red or gray crosses brings forth support helicopters, which can link up with the jetcopter to provide sideways missiles or additional forward missiles (a super cool feature somewhat reminiscent of *1942*). Shooting green crosses gives players extra bombs, which hit everything within a fairly large radius. Excellent controls, rock solid action, and smooth difficulty progression make *Tiger-Heli* one of the better shooters for the system. When compared to Taito's 1985 arcade original, there is graphical breakup and simplification of the visuals in general, but most NES owners will gladly overlook these relatively minor flaws.

Tiles of Fate

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: American Video Entertainment. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

Tiles of Fate has players matching Chinese symbol tiles in order to make them disappear. Each tile has a twin, but the "force of symmetry" cannot flow across more than two right angles. Brick walls and time limits provide additional challenges. Fortunately, there are three

helpful “forces of fate”: flash of chance, which allows symmetry to affect any matching tile; force of balance, which destroys brick walls; and flag of knowledge, which knows where all the remaining matches are. An edit mode lets players design (but not save) their own puzzles. Unlicensed.

Time Lord

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare.
Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

To thwart an alien invasion circa 2999, players must travel back in time to four historical zones: Castle Harman, Medieval England; Deadman’s Gulch, Western U.S.A.; A Pirate Ship in the Caribbean; and World War II, France. Each era boasts music, visuals, and weaponry befitting of the time, such as a broadsword (with magical powers) in England and a six-shooter and shotgun in the Old West. Enemies are fitting as well, ranging from dragons to cowboys to pirates to soldiers. The tried-and-true run, jump, punch, kick, and use-weapon formula is complemented by the necessity of collecting five orbs in each level (some of which are found by solving light puzzles). Rare rarely lets gamers down, and *Time Lord* is no exception. Somewhat similar to: *Double Dragon*.

Times of Lore

PUBLISHER: Toho. DEVELOPER: Origin Systems.
Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

Viewed from overhead, *Times of Lore* finds the Kingdom of Albareth under attack. As a Knight, a Valkyrie, or a Barbarian, players must confront this siege by journeying through forests, towns, dungeons, seashores, deserts, and other locales, engaging in real-time battles with bandits, orcs, ghosts, slimes, skeletons, and other enemies. The action covers the entire screen, but pop-ups appear on the bottom half of the screen when it’s time to make selections (look, grab, hold, give, speak, and the like) and talk to characters (conversations are conducted via key phrases). In addition to battling creatures, players must use keys to open doors, eat food to recover energy, and pick up such items

as a dagger, an axe, boots (for walking long distances), scrolls (for freezing or destroying all onscreen enemies), and potions (for restoring hit points and floating and traveling at high speeds). Based on the 1988 computer game.

Tiny Toon Adventures

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Steven Spielberg’s animated series comes to playable life via the NES. Montana Max has kidnapped Babs Bunny, and it is up to her friends to rescue her. The main character is Buster Bunny, who is the best jumper, but players can switch control to Dizzy Devil (unleashes spin attack), Furrball (climbs walls), or Plucky Duck (glides and swims well). Through the game’s six short levels (Field of Screamz, Motion Ocean, Sure Weird Forest, Boomtown, Wackyland, and Monty’s Mansion), players must bounce on bad guys, jump on moving platforms, avoid traps, trigger switches, and open doors. Enemies include Roderick Rat, Danforth Drake, Rubella Rat, Captain Claw, Dr. Gene Splicer, and others. The colorful, cartoon-like action will appeal to fans of the show and to fans of such games as *Super Mario Bros.*

Tiny Toon Adventures Cartoon Workshop

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Novotrade.
Art, 1 player. 1992.

Though not a game in the strictest sense, *Cartoon Workshop* lives up to its name by letting participants create their own animated short films. From a selectable list of Buster Bunny, Babs Bunny, Plucky Duck, Furrball, Calamity Coyote, and Little Beeper, players can include up to two characters on screen at once, each of whom can perform such actions as skipping, jumping, skating, eating, swimming, kicking a ball, and/or blasting off in a rocket. They can also be placed in a variety of settings, such as a lake, a city, a desert, a forest, or an ocean. Music, sound effects, and captions can be added as well. Based on Steven Spielberg’s cartoon creation, *Tiny Toon Adventures* (syndicated, 1990–95), which was the subject of numerous other video games, including *Tiny*

Toon Adventures: Buster's Hidden Treasure (Genesis) and *Tiny Toon Adventures: Buster Busts Loose* (SNES). Similar to: *Wacky Worlds Creative Studio* (Genesis).

Tiny Toon Adventures 2: Trouble in Wackyland

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Buster Bunny, Babs Bunny, Plucky Duck, Hampton Hog, and Furrball the cat have been invited to a new amusement park, but each ride is a trap. In Train, Hampton walks across the top of a moving train, jumping over flags, attacking rats, and collecting cupcakes. Roller Coaster finds Babs riding up and down hills and loops, grabbing grapes and avoiding obstacles by jumping and by flipping upside down. Log Ride puts Furrball aboard the titular log, surfing up and down side-scrolling hills while jumping over fish, logs, and other obstacles. Bumper Cars is the oddball overhead-view event, with players bumping enemy cars into holes. Finally, earning four golden tickets grants entrance to the Fun House, in which Buster jumps over gaps, hops on moving platforms, turns flips to attack enemies, walks upside down, avoids a love-struck Elmyra, and more. *Tiny Toon Adventures 2* is brief, but cute, fun, and challenging.

To the Earth

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

A nice change of pace from such traditional light fun fare as *Duck Hunt* and *Hogan's Alley*, *To the Earth* puts the action in outer space (four stages in all), with players firing away at fast spaceships that begin in the distance and whiz close by, creating a neat visual effect. Shooting enemies gains energy while misses and getting shot depletes energy. A limited number of smart bombs are available, and destroying comets provides players with barrier shields. Other objects to shoot include laser bombs, hyper missiles, asteroids, and bosses, the latter of which includes a swirling, dragon-like creature called Zambuka.

Toki

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Taito. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Despite visual flatness, *Toki* for the NES is a nice port of TAD Corporation's 1989 arcade game. Players guide a man-turned-monkey through six levels of play (Labyrinth of Caves, Lake Neptune, Caverns of Fire, Ice Palace, Dark Jungle, and Golden Palace), jumping over obstacles, climbing up and down vines, swimming, and jumping on or spitting fireballs at such enemies as ape warriors, smoke genies, armor lizards, and guardian squids. Weapons to grab include double, wave, three-way, flame, and power meter. Other useful items include keys (for entering locked rooms), football helmets (for protection against enemies), fruit (for extra points), clocks (for additional time), and shoes (for jumping higher). Also released for the Atari Lynx. Fans of the game should also check out *Toki: Going Ape Spit* for the Genesis.

Tom & Jerry

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Tom has kidnapped Jerry's nephew Tuffy and locked him in the attic. As the running, jumping, climbing Jerry, players must work their way from the basement up through the house, throwing marbles at bats, bees, spiders, and other enemies along the way. Unlike the more simplistic (though graphically superior) SNES game (which is called *Tom and Jerry*), the NES game equips Jerry with a variety of defensive weapons, including bubble gum, a meat cleaver, a hammer, and invisible ink. In addition, Jerry can eat cheese for extra points and enter hidden mouse holes to play bonus stages. Created by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, the dueling cat and mouse team of *Tom and Jerry* began in the 1940s as a series of theatrical shorts, leading to decades of TV cartoons and even a feature film.

Tombs & Treasure

PUBLISHER: Infocom. DEVELOPER: Tokyo Shoseki. First-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

A famous archaeologist has disappeared in the ruins of Chichen Itza. To make it through the ancient Mayan city, which includes temples, sacrificial lakes, and the deadly Ball Court, players must collect and use items in strategic ways. This involves pointing and clicking on icons representing various forms of action, including go, look, take, put, use, move, push, pull, smash, join, and wash. The screen is divided into five windows: Location, Message, Icon, Text, and Action. Unlike such similar games as *Déjà Vu* and *Shadowgate*, *Tombs & Treasure* features turn-based, RPG-style monster battles. Includes password feature. Based on the 1987 Japanese computer game, *Taiyou no Shin-den Asteka II*.

Toobin'

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Boat/Watercraft Racing, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1989.

When Atari's *Toobin'* appeared in the arcades in 1988, it was a wildly original concept, pitting Bif against Jet as they rode on inner tubes down such overhead-view rivers as the Colorado, Nile, Styx, Canals of Mars, and Jurassic, steering around obstacles (whirlpools, dinosaur tails, bullets, and more) and throwing cans at such enemies as alligators, hunters, and cavemen. Technically, the NES has a two-player simultaneous mode, but it's a far cry from the quarter-muncher. One player steers the inner tube while the other throws cans. Gone is the coin-op classic's racing mode, in which Bif and Jet each has his own inner tube. Also gone are a number of graphical flourishes, such as the between-level parties and Bif and Jet entering the river through a starting gate. In addition, the NES version doesn't have the same feel as its coin-op counterpart, thanks to the latter's five-button control scheme. Also released for the Game Boy Color. Unlicensed.

Top Gun

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1987.

Loosely based on the 1986 feature film, *Top Gun* puts players in the cockpit of an F-14 Tomcat, using an unlimited supply of bullets

and one of three types of missiles (hound, wolf, and tiger, each varying in quantity and power) to battle fighters, attack copters, submarines, battle cruisers, tanks, and other enemies. The game is short, offering just four missions: Training, Destroying an Aircraft Carrier, Destroying an Enemy Base, and Destroying a Space Shuttle. Radar helps players monitor enemies, and a sighting device is used for targeting enemies. Other gauges to monitor include altimeter, air speed indicator, fuel meter, artificial horizon, and damage indicator. In addition to combat, players must refuel (while airborne) and land on aircraft carriers, making for a very difficult (i.e. frustrating) game.

Top Gun: The Second Mission

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

The sequel to *Top Gun: The Second Mission* once again puts players in the cockpit of an F-14 Tomcat, but there are two additional game modes, meaning players can now battle it out against an opponent (via split-screen action) or one-on-one against the "enemy's finest pilots." Standard missions include Destroy Enemy Bomber, Destroy Top Secret Helicopter, and Destroy Enemy Space Shuttle, with players shooting down tanks, submarines, fighters, choppers, and other enemies while en route to the ultimate destination. Gamers have unlimited bullets, plus three types of missiles: phoenix, sparrow, and sidewinder, each varying in quantity and power. As in the original *Top Gun*, players must land their plane, but this time it's much easier. *Top Gun*, the popular film starring Tom Cruise, was the subject of numerous other video games, including *Top Gun: Guts and Glory* (Game Boy) and *Top Gun: Fire at Will!* (PlayStation).

Top Players' Tennis Featuring Chris Evert & Ivan Lendl

PUBLISHER: Asmik. DEVELOPER: Home Data. Sports/Tennis, 1-4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Top Players' Tennis does a nice job simulating the popular sport and even features two

of the all-time greats as playable characters. Gamers can pull off lots of hits and moves, including top spin, side spin, lob, fast and slow serve, slice, ground stroke volley, smash, backhand, forehand, dive, and jump. Holding the button in increases the strength of the shot while striking the ball away from the body has a different effect than striking it close to the body. Miracle plays are available as well, such as the ball splitting into a myriad of balls or being returned at super high velocity. Three courts are available (hard, clay, and grass), and winning matches lets players upgrade the strength, speed, agility, stamina, skill, ball spin, focus, and miracle power of their character. Multi-tap adapter compatible.

Total Recall

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Interplay. Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Based on the 1990 film (which in turn was based on Philip K. Dick's novel, *We'll Remember It for You Wholesale*), *Total Recall* for the NES puts gamers in the everyman role of Douglas Quaid, who was played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the movie. The victim of a virtual vacation to Mars gone wrong, Quaid must battle his way through city streets, subways, a cement factory, and other areas, avoiding bad guy Richter and searching for energy canisters along the way. Quaid can run, jump, crouch, enter doors, climb ladders, and pick up and fire a handgun, a machine gun, and lasers. In the overhead view Martian Transit Hub, Quaid drives around a scrolling, maze-like area, dropping land mines and shooting other vehicles. *Total Recall* offers a few interesting moments, such as when Quaid walks behind an x-ray machine and when he must battle his own wife, but the action is clumsy and unfulfilling overall.

Totally Rad

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

One of several NES titles that use such dated (in the contextual sense) lingo as “gnarly” and “bodacious,” *Totally Rad* puts players in

control of a “most unprecedented regular dude” named Jake, who runs, jumps, shoots (holding down a button charges the weapon), and uses magic through 12 levels of play, including Amusement Park, Under the Big Top, Dark Forest, and Caves of the Underground World. The aforementioned magic enables Jake to: increase his life gauge; become temporarily invulnerable; weaken, freeze, or eliminate all on-screen enemies (monsters, robots, aliens, and the like); or transform into a lion (for jumping higher), an eagle (for flying), or a fish (for swimming). Despite the transformation sequences and some huge, colorful bosses, *Totally Rad* is a middle-of-the-road (or should that be “middle-of-the-rad”?) platformer.

Touchdown Fever

PUBLISHER: SNK. DEVELOPER: SNK. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

Unlike SNK's critically acclaimed *Baseball Stars*, *Touchdown Fever* fails to deliver a playable rendition of its respective sport. The players are small and slow, there are no selectable defensive formations, forward passes are *always* allowable, and interceptions are far too easy to throw. The top-down, vertically scrolling action includes 12 teams from NFL cities, but no licensed teams or players. There are six offensive plays/formations from which to choose: long pass, short pass, handoff, quarterback sneak, I-formation, and shotgun. Based on SNK's 1987 arcade game.

Toxic Crusaders

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the 1991 cartoon series (which in turn was based on Troma's *The Toxic Avenger* feature film), *Toxic Crusaders* puts players in the role of Toxie, a super-hero/sludge monster who packs a mean punch and a special mop, the latter of which can be powered up to shoot projectiles or be thrown like a boomerang. Toxie must work his way through six slimy levels in the town of Tromaville (including a high school, a factory, a sewer, and Island City), jumping over acid streams, battling Dr. Killemoff's henchmen, avoiding bricks and spikes, riding a skateboard

(in level four), and more. This mediocre (at best) game is superior to its Genesis and Game Boy counterparts, but that's not saying much.

Track & Field

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Sports/Track & Field, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

A respectable port of Konami's 1983 arcade game, *Track & Field* for the NES includes five of the six events found in the coin-op classic: 100 Meter Dash, Long Jump, 110 Meter Hurdles, Javelin Throw, and High Jump. Hammer Throw is missing from the NES version, but the cartridge does feature three extra events: Skeet Shooting, Triple Jump, and Archery. In the running events, the faster the buttons are pressed, the faster the runners will go, making for some furious button-mashing action. Also released for the Game Boy.

Track & Field II

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami.
Sports/Track & Field, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Sporting better graphics and more elaborate controls than the first game, *Track & Field II* also has a wider variety of events. These include Fencing, Triple Jump, Freestyle Swimming, High Dive, Clay Pigeon Shooting, Hammer Throw, Taekwondo, Pole Vault, Canoeing, Archery, Hurdles, and Horizontal Bar. Less emphasis is placed on fast button pushing than in *Track & Field*, though that is still a factor. New modes of play include Training, Championship, and Versus. The game is compatible with Nintendo's Zapper light gun. The arcade sequel to *Track & Field* was called *Hyper Sports*, but it had just seven events.

Treasure Master

PUBLISHER: American Softworks. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Supplemented by a contest in which a password was given out on MTV that would allow players to reach a secret, end-of-game prize world, *Treasure Master* has gamers using scissors, bombs, a ray gun, enhancement gog-

gles, keys, arrows, radium plated boots, and other items to help explore a variety of worlds, including The Islands, Microchip (which is supposedly inside the NES), and The Moon. Cosmic caterpillars, sonic saucers, solar road hogs, blitz blimps, monster sharks, and other enemies make life difficult for the titular hero, who can run, jump, crouch, climb, and catch. He can also ride a moon buggy.

Trog!

PUBLISHER: Acclaim Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Visual Concepts. Maze, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

In *Trog!*, players guide a cartoonish dinosaur around a series of 50 non-scrolling island mazes, collecting eggs while avoiding Trogs (cavemen), fire, mushrooms (which slow the dinosaur down), tar pits, and holes. Unlike *Pac-Man*, the hero in *Trog!* can punch its foes. In addition, the dinosaur can grab such helpful items as ice cubes (for freezing Trogs), red flowers (for extra speed), and hot tamales (for breathing fireballs). The most enjoyable items to pick up are pineapples, which turn the dinosaur into a T-rex, enabling players to eat the pursuing cavemen. In later levels, Trogs learn to jump. For maze fans, *Trog!* is an essential (if somewhat obscure) part of the NES library. Based on the 1990 Bally/Midway arcade game, which lacked the exclamation point in the title, but offered a four-player mode and had more of a claymation look to the characters.

Trojan

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom.
Side-Scrolling Combat/Fighting, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1987.

In *Trojan*, players guide the titular warrior through seven levels (including a dilapidated city, a jungle, and caves), hacking and slashing killer piranha, armadillo-like freaks, hatchet-wielding monsters, knife-throwing creatures, and other enemies. If the Trojan warrior loses his fast-action sword and highly maneuverable shield, he must resort to punching and kicking. Hidden items, which players can find by slashing the sword, reveal higher jumps, keys for opening passages, faster walk-

ing speed, and more. The arcade version (Romstar/Capcom, 1986) has more detailed graphics, but the NES rendition has some interesting additions, such as a one-on-one fighting mode (which is simplistic, but welcome) and the ability for players to enter manholes to explore sewers. Interestingly, boots make players jump higher in the NES version while jumping zones are used in the arcade game. Though not as well known or as polished as such Capcom classics as *Mega Man* or *Ghosts 'n Goblins*, *Trojan* is a fun, challenging game.

Trolls on Treasure Island

Publisher: American Video Entertainment.
Developer: American Video Entertainment.
Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Trolls on Treasure Island is essentially the same game as *Dudes with Attitude*, but the smiley faces have been replaced by Trolls (the naked little doll creatures denoted by ugly faces and swaths of long, furry hair). In addition, the game contains some new levels. Includes pass-word feature. Unlicensed.

Twin Cobra

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: American Sammy. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Based on the Taito/Romstar arcade game (1987), *Twin Cobra* has players flying an assault chopper over 10 levels of land and sea, shooting and bombing attack copters, tanks, jets, gunboats, battleships, and gun turrets. Grabbing color-coded orbs changes the chopper's weaponry (missiles, lasers, spread-shots, and four-way fire) while S and B icons increase the power of the current weapon and the number of bombs (respectively). Like the more accurately emulated Genesis port, the NES game lacks the two-player option found in the coin-op semi-classic. Fans of *Tiger-Heli*, 1942, and *Xenious* should enjoy *Twin Cobra*. Followed by: *Twin Cobra 2* (arcade).

Twin Eagle

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Seta. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Based on the Seta/Taito arcade game (1988), *Twin Eagle* is a nondescript (if playable) shooter that, like its coin-op counterpart, doesn't have any bosses (with the exception of the enemy fortress at the end of the game). The coin-op version has nine levels while this port has just five, making it a much shorter game. Gameplay entails guiding a helicopter over land and sea, shooting and dropping bombs on soldiers, planes, tanks, boats, and other enemies. Destroying certain enemy strongholds emits hostages to rescue while certain defeated enemies leave behind such powers-ups as smart bombs and double and triple fire. Followed by: *Twin Eagle II* (arcade).

Ultima: Exodus

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon.
Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1989.

A port of the groundbreaking computer game, *Ultima III: Exodus* (1983), *Ultima: Exodus* (which features a new soundtrack and enhanced visuals) was the first of three *Ultima* games for the NES (*Ultima I: The First Age of Darkness* and *Ultima II: The Revenge of the Enchantress* never made it to the 8-bit console). The game takes place after the defeat of Mondain and Minax, who gave birth to a child named Exodus, a vengeful being who has grown up and must be destroyed. From a list of five races (human, elf, dwarf, bobbit, and fuzzy) and 11 professions (fighter, cleric, thief, wizard, and the like), players must create a party of four characters, each rated according to strength, dexterity, intelligence, and wisdom. The heroic quartet must travel the forests, mountains, oceans, castles, and maze-like dungeons of Sosaria, casting magical spells, talking to townsfolk, and purchasing weapons, tools, and armor. Monster battles are executed via a tactical, turn-based combat system in which the characters stand across from their opponents. Much of the action consists of selecting commands from text menus, such as give, get, climb, fight, and direction. Includes battery backup.

Ultima: Quest of the Avatar

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon.
Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

The second *Ultima* game for the NES, *Ultima: Quest of the Avatar* is a port of the popular computer title, *Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar* (1985). The game is a departure from previous RPGs in that players are on a quest to become the Avatar, a shining example of heroism for the people of Britannia. There are still doors to unlock, text-based commands to select, dungeons (of the pseudo-3D variety) to explore, treasure chests to find, magic spells to cast, weapons to brandish (including a sling, a staff, a club, an axe, and a sword), and monsters to kill (via turn-based battles), but players must now be careful to master eight virtues: valor, compassion, honesty, honor, sacrifice, justice, humility, and spirituality. Fleeing from a battle lowers valor, lying decreases honesty, giving blood increases sacrifice, and so on. The game offers eight playable character types: mage, bard, fighter, druid, tinker, paladin, ranger, and shepherd, each rating according to such data as strength, dexterity, experience, hit points, and intelligence. Includes battery backup.

Ultima: Warriors of Destiny

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Pony Canyon.
Third-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player.
1993.

The third and final *Ultima* game for the NES, *Ultima: Warriors of Destiny* is a port of the popular computer game, *Ultima V: Warriors of Destiny* (1988). Unfortunately, it's the most disappointing of the three, thanks to sluggish controls, repetitious music, and crummy graphics (including prohibitively dark nighttime scenes). The player, as the hero of Britannia (aka the Avatar), must rescue Lord British (who has disappeared in the Underworld) and defeat the once-trusted Lord Blackthorn, who has risen to power and rules as a fascist dictator. This involves: interacting with hundreds of characters; engaging in turn-based battles (using bows, magic axes, slings, swords, and other weaponry); riding a horse and a magic carpet; searching dungeons for treasure; boosting karma, compassion, and other virtues (by doing good deeds); and much more. Includes battery backup. Followed by numerous sequels

and offshoots, including *Ultima VI: The Lost Prophet* (SNES), *Ultima VII: The Black Gate* (SNES), *Ultima: Runes of Virtue* (Game Boy), and *Ultima: Runes of Virtue II* (SNES).

Ultimate Air Combat

PUBLISHER: Activision. DEVELOPER: Activision.
Flight Combat Simulator/Overhead View
Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Ultimate Air Combat puts players in the role of the Navy's greatest test pilot, charged with an important objective: to stop General Luigi Don Gwano from taking command of all neighboring oil fields. Depending on the plane selected, gamers view the action from inside the cockpit of an AV-8 Harrier, an F14 Tomcat, or an F18 Hornet, each of which is armed with a variety of lasers, missiles, cannons, and bombs. Missions, which are introduced via briefings, are divided into two sections: the aforementioned cockpit view (complete with half-screen instrument panel), in which players blow away airborne enemies; and an unusual (for this type of game) overhead view (reminiscent of EA's *Desert Strike* series), in which players bomb surface targets in addition to shooting enemy planes. Includes password feature and digitized voice effects (spoken by the co-pilot).

Ultimate Basketball

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER:
American Sammy. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2
players (simultaneous). 1990.

Although it has the type of detailed graphics and close-up dunk animations that *Double Dribble* fans will find familiar, *Ultimate Basketball* is not as good as the game it seemingly tries to imitate. The five-on-five action is certainly playable (especially in two-player mode), but it is hampered by spotty inbound passing, cheap foul calls, uneven stealing (the computer is invariably a much better ball thief than the player), and the fact that the computer players frequently hold on to the ball after trying to dunk. Includes player substitutions, fouls, back court violations, and a Tournament mode (in which players have to beat two of the game's seven fictional teams). The elevated view is from

the side, and the screen scrolls horizontally to show the entire court.

Ultimate League Soccer

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment.

DEVELOPER: C&E. Sports/Soccer, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Ultimate League Soccer lets players select from eight different international teams, each of which is ranked according to offense, defense, speed, skill, accuracy, and experience. The game, which scrolls in all directions to show the entire field, offers an overhead view and two modes of play: Ultimate League (a single game) and World Cup. Players can select from four different uniform colors (white, green, gray, and red) and three different game lengths and player formations. Penalty kick contests determine the winner of games that end in a tie. Unlicensed.

Ultimate Stuntman

PUBLISHER: Camerica. DEVELOPER: Codemas-ters. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1991.

Ultimate Stuntman is a fun, good looking game that oozes with variety. In pursuit of Dr. Evil, players race (overhead view/vertical scrolling) through streets, over lakes, and across beaches, shooting enemies and dodging missiles, rockfalls, bombs, and other obstacles. Then players take to the side-scrolling streets, collecting keys, jumping on platforms, and shooting robots. *Crazy Climber*-like action is next as players, as a human fly, scale a building, with the added thrill of guiding a crosshair around the screen, shooting giant spiders. More shooting ensues, plus some puzzle elements involving the diffusing of a bomb. Finally, players pilot a microlight plane, avoiding crashing into rocks and cliffs while shooting enemies.

The Uncanny X-Men

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Interactive Video Games. Overhead View Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Called “Marvel’s X-Men” on the title screen, *The Uncanny X-Men* marked the first appearance of the mutant super-group on a video game console. Unfortunately, thanks to lousy gameplay and hideous graphics, it is a

disgrace to the popular comic book series. Players guide a small, pitifully rendered version of Wolverine, Cyclops, Storm, Colossus, Nightcrawler, or Iceman up the screen, using his or her special powers (along with bombs) to battle Juggernaut, The White Queen, Boomerang, Sabretooth, and Magneto, along with scores of lesser villains. The computer or a second player guides a tagalong X-Man, and solo gamers can toggle control of the two characters selected. Five missions, each of which contains two keys to find, are included: Practice (which takes place in the Danger Room); Future City Street Fight; Search and Destroy the Robofactory; Subterranean Confrontation; and Battle through a Living Starship.

Uncharted Waters

PUBLISHER: Koei. DEVELOPER: Koei. Role-Playing Game/Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

Set in 1502, which is a decade after the legendary voyage of Christopher Columbus, *Uncharted Waters* puts players in the role of a Portuguese captain, bartering for precious treasures as a merchant or plundering and pillaging as a ruthless pirate. Players must: walk through the streets of Lisbon; recruit sailors; sail the open seas; discover hidden ports (along the coastline) and new trade routes; rescue people in distress; fight Spanish and Turkish fleets (in turn-based battles); gain allies for Portugal; purchase and repair ships; stock ships with supplies; play cards; visit inns for food and gossip; deal with typhoons and strong currents; and much more. Much of the action is viewed from overhead. Success increases the player’s sailing experience, sailing level, leadership, strength, wisdom, courage, and intelligence. Includes battery backup. Also released for the SNES and Genesis. Followed by: *New Horizons* (SNES, Genesis).

Uninvited

PUBLISHER: Seika. DEVELOPER: ICOM Simulations. First-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

This adventure game finds the lead character exploring a haunted house, searching for his sister who disappeared after a car crash.

This involves pointing and clicking on a variety of commands (exam, open, use, hit, speak, and the like) to interact with characters, solve puzzles (some of which are unreasonably tough), search for clues, manipulate objects (including weapons), maneuver through the house, and more. Fans of *Shadowgate* and *Déjà Vu* should enjoy *Uninvited*, which was originally a Macintosh computer game (1986). Includes battery backup.

The Untouchables

PUBLISHER: Ocean. DEVELOPER: Special FX Software. Third-Person Shooter/Platform Shooter/First-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Based on Brian De Palma's 1987 feature film (which in turn was based on the 1959 TV series), *The Untouchables* takes place in prohibition era Chicago, with players controlling Eliot Ness and his elite squad of crime busters: Malone, Stone, and Wallace. There are seven levels of play, the first of which (Streets) finds Ness, viewed from behind, popping out from behind a wall, taking shots at gangsters appearing in alleyway windows. Unfortunately, the gun site is slow, and Ness must reload after every two shots, causing sheer frustration. Subsequent levels of play include: Warehouse (jump on crates, shoot bad guys, grab evidence); Bridge (lie on ground for cover, use rapid fire to kill gangsters); Alley (similar to Streets); Train Station (guide baby carriage down stairs while avoiding enemy fire and obstacles); Hostage (take out Al Capone's henchman using only one shot); and Rooftops (similar to Streets). The SNES version is somewhat similar, but has better graphics (of course) and some overhead view action.

Urban Champion

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Although sluggish and limited by today's standards, *Urban Champion* was a fun game upon release. Players control a blue- or green-haired street brawler, each of whom has two surprisingly strategic fighting moves: a fast, soft punch and a slow, hard punch. The objective is to back the opposing fighter into a manhole or reduce his stamina to zero. Citi-

zens drop flower pots out of windows, adding to the challenge. If the cops show up, players should stop fighting until the heat is off. Background graphics largely consist of generic looking buildings. Nintendo released the game in the arcades the previous year as *Vs. Urban Champion*.

Vegas Dream

PUBLISHER: HAL America. DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory. Gambling, 1-4 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Vegas Dream is comprised of four different casino games: Blackjack (which includes the ability to buy insurance, double down, and split pairs); Roulette; Slot Machines (Jackpot Bar and Pot'o Gold); and Keno. Unfortunately, poker is not included. One Spot mode offers standard gambling action while the more adventurous Vegas Dream mode incorporates people who will approach you looking for side bets, romance, handouts, and more. Players begin with \$700 and can loan money to one another in this fun, nicely programmed gambling simulator. Includes password feature.

Venice Beach Volleyball

PUBLISHER: American Video Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Idea-Tek. Sports/Volleyball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Venice Beach Volleyball lets players select from four different two-player teams, each of which is rated according to speed, smash (spiking ability), and receiving (how well the team plays an opponent's serve or hit). Players can compete or team up against the computer, and there are two types of serves (flat and jump), two scoring systems (normal and rally point), and three difficulty levels. The elevated view is from the side, and the action scrolls horizontally to show the entire court. Although unlicensed and somewhat limited (there's only one court and no tournament mode), *VBV* plays a decent game of beach volleyball.

Vice: Project Doom

PUBLISHER: American Sammy. DEVELOPER: Aicom. Side-Scrolling Platform/Demolition/Combat Racing/First-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

Boasting cinematic visuals and robust, challenging, fast-paced gameplay, *Vice: Project Doom* begins with players driving up the screen (ala *Spy Hunter*), shooting at enemy vehicles. The action then switches to a side-scrolling perspective (ala *Ninja Gaiden*), with gamers jumping on platforms and over gaps, using a nifty laser whip, grenades, and a .44 magnum to fend off flying creatures, thugs on pogo sticks, and other enemies. There's also first-person shooter action (ala *Operation Wolf*), in which gamers guide a cursor around the screen, blowing away bad guys, destroying backgrounds, and gaining power-ups. The storyline, which is told through cut scenes, revolves around the manufacturing of an alien-produced gel that is addicting and lethal to humans.

Videomation

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Western Technologies. Art, 1 player. 1991.

Videomation lets aspiring artists use a variety of virtual tools (pencil, line, arrow, square, circle, paint bucket) to draw and paint designs and pictures on the screen. The tools can be adjusted to move slowly or quickly and thin or wide, and players can erase, select from a variety of colors, and add stamps and animations. Art cannot be saved, but, as with any video game played on a TV, the images can be recorded on video cassette.

Vindicators

PUBLISHER: Tengen. DEVELOPER: Tengen. Vertical Scrolling Tank Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Set in the year 2525, *Vindicators* has players driving a battle tank (which can rotate and fire in all directions) through 14 labyrinthine space stations (viewed from overhead), shooting tanks, turrets, mines, and flying saucers while gathering up fuel and battle stars, the latter of which are used to upgrade/customize the tank's speed, fuel, shot range, shot power, shot speed, and force shields. Battle stars are also good for purchasing smart shots (which track most any type of enemy) and bomb cannons. Enemy bosses (including Sentry Robot and

Mega-Brain) guard doorways between each space station, and it is necessary to pick up keys to progress from level to level. Destroying space station control centers plays a factor as well. In two-player mode, shooting the other player's tank transfers fuel from the shooter tank to the tank that has been shot. This is a nice port of Atari's 1988 arcade game, which did benefit from dual joystick control, detailed onscreen instructions, and a much cooler title screen. Followed by: *Vindicators Part II* (arcade), which was simply a stripped down version of the original *Vindicators*.

Volleyball

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Sports/Volleyball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

This six-on-six *Volleyball* game for the NES lets players compete as the men's or women's U.S. team against seven different countries: Russia, China, Cuba, Japan, Brazil, Korea, and Tunisia. The Training mode is for practice while the Game mode presents a tougher challenge. Players can feint, block, vary the strength and direction of serves, set the ball high or low, and spike the ball hard or across. Unfortunately, poor controls and bad collision detection make the game virtually unplayable. The elevated view is from the side, and the screen scrolls horizontally to show the entire court.

Wacky Races

PUBLISHER: Atlus. DEVELOPER: Atlus. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Despite being based on a racing cartoon, *Wacky Races* for the NES is not a racing game. Rather, it's a standard (if fairly enjoyable) platformer in which players guide Muttley through such areas as a desert, a castle, a forest, an island, downtown, an ice village, a mountain, and a western town. Muttley runs, jumps (over cacti, spikes, houses, and other obstacles), crouches, and bites (fish, cats, snowmen, snakes, and other enemies), and he can gather bones to earn bombs, wings (for better jumping control), sonic barks, and health. The graphics are

flat (if nicely drawn), but the game does include other racers from the TV show as bosses. Muttley's ultimate goal is to rescue the nefarious Dick Dastardly. Actual racing games based on Hanna-Barbera's cartoon franchise include: *Wacky Races* (Dreamcast, Game Boy Color) and *Wacky Races: Crash & Dash* (Nintendo DS, Wii).

Wall Street Kid

PUBLISHER: Sofel. DEVELOPER: Sofel. Business Simulator, 1 player. 1990.

This cartoonish point-and-click stock market simulator has players buying, selling, and trading stocks (blue chip, speculative, cyclical, and growth) from such semi-familiar companies as YBM, Yapple, and American Depress. Armed with \$500,000, players must invest wisely to make their assets grow. To help facilitate the process, players can consult the "Wall Street Times" and get advice from Connie the Arrogant Advisor and Ruth the Ruthless Banker. Other aspects of *Wall Street Kid* include keeping physically fit (by swimming, going to the gym, and hiking) and pampering your girlfriend with gifts. Includes password feature.

Wally Bear and the NO! Gang

PUBLISHER: American Game Cartridges. DEVELOPER: AGCI. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

This game puts players in the role of Wally Bear, a "just say no" type of guy who skateboards around town, throwing pies at rats, lizards, and other enemies while dodging and/or jumping over balls, bats, birds, and other obstacles. The mission through the seven levels of play is to save Toby Turtle from Ricky Rat, the latter of whom is a drug dealer. Like most unlicensed NES games, *Wally Bear* has crude graphics and sluggish controls, but the unintentionally humorous anti-drug messages do provide some amusement.

Wario's Woods

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1994.

The last licensed NES game released in North America, *Wario's Woods* is a clever and engaging take on the "falling block" subgenre invented by *Tetris*. As bombs (provided by Sprite) and monsters (unleashed by Black Bat) descend from the sky, Toad, in a rare starring role, must scurry about, arranging them in groupings of three or more (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally) in order to make them vanish. Toad can climb, kick objects, move stacks, and more. For the bombs and monsters to disappear, they must be of the same color, and at least one bomb must be in the line. Pulling off chain reactions, eliminating diamonds, and making rows of monsters disappear cause special things to happen, such as raising the ceiling (the fiendish boss Wario is on hand to lower the ceiling) or turning the opponent's bombs into diamonds (in two-player split screen mode). The SNES version of *Wario's Woods* has better graphics, battery backup, a VS Com mode, and diamonds that can be lifted, dropped, and kicked.

Wayne Gretzky Hockey

PUBLISHER: THQ. DEVELOPER: Bethesda Softworks. Sports/Hockey, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

Viewed from overhead, *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* is one of the lesser sports games for the NES. Players can shoot, pass, demand passes from teammates, check opponents, commit penalties (hooking, slashing, high sticking, etc.), and more, but the game has terrible graphics, monotonous coloring, small skaters, and sub par gameplay. Options include period length, game speed, and game type (Practice, Normal, and Playoff). In two-player mode, gamers can go at it head-to-head or team up against the computer. Based on the 1989 computer game. "The Great One" starred in several other video games, including *Wayne Gretzky and the NHLPA All-Stars* (Genesis, SNES) and *Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey* (arcade, Nintendo 64).

Wayne's World

PUBLISHER: THQ Software. DEVELOPER: Radical Entertainment. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Much different than its Genesis and Super NES counterparts, *Wayne's World* for the NES lets players control Wayne or Garth (as opposed to just Wayne), depending on which section of which level the player is in. Garth uses a gun to shoot the musical instruments, ninjas, bouncers, cats, spiders, and other enemies while Wayne employs a kicking maneuver. Both can duck under objects, enter doors, and jump across gaps, onto ledges, and the like. Levels include: Kramer's Music Store, Stan Mikita's Donut Shop, The Gasworks, Alleyway, Benjamin's Chicago Studio, and Benjamin's Condo. The action is limited in nature, and the game is short and easy to beat. Based on the 1992 feature film (which in turn was based on a *Saturday Night Live* skit), *Wayne's World* is excellent. NOT!

WCW: World Championship Wrestling

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Nihon Bussan. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

The only WCW title for the NES, this entertaining game is a series of one-on-one fights against 13 different large wrestlers, including such stars as Rick Flair, Sting, and Lex Luger, and an unlockable character called the WCW Master. Tag team matches are included, as are a variety of standard wrestling moves, such as punches, kicks, head butts, body slams, hammer throws, flying moves, and grapples. The wrestlers are somewhat similar in appearance, but each has a unique special move, such as jumping neck breaker drop, neck wringer, jumping elbow drop, or double arm suplex. Wrestlers can also climb out of the ring to go grab a weapon. The elevated view is from the side, and the screen scrolls horizontally to show the entire ring.

Werewolf: The Last Warrior

PUBLISHER: Data East. DEVELOPER: Takara. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

In *Werewolf: The Last Warrior*, Chief War Wolf must battle his way through five short, but challenging levels, punching and using a power ray on an assortment of bad guys and

monsters. There are ladders to climb, obstacles to jump over, and more. Players begin in human form, but grabbing a red W icon transforms the character into a powerful werewolf capable of crawling, doing back flips, and walking on the ceiling. Grabbing five white power bubbles fills an anger meter that transforms players into an even more powerful super werewolf. Other items grant extra time, additional lives, invincibility, and restoration of health. Included in the package is a *Werewolf* comic book.

Wheel of Fortune

PUBLISHER: Gametek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Based on the long-running TV game show, *Wheel of Fortune* for the NES is not endorsed by Pat Sajak or Vanna White, but a pretty blonde in a dress is on hand to turn the letters. As play begins, gamers are shown a wall of hidden letters (blank boxes) spelling out a word or words in one of the following categories: person, people, phrase, place, event, title, or thing (there are more than 1,000 puzzles in all). To guess a consonant in the puzzle, players spin a large wheel (which appears on another screen), hoping that the wheel lands on a dollar amount or free spin (as opposed to bankrupt or lose a turn). Players can choose to buy a vowel in lieu of guessing a consonant, or they can bypass the wheel altogether and attempt to solve the puzzle. After the first two rounds, play switches to a speed-up round. The fourth and final round is a bonus game in which the winner competes for valuable prizes. Also released for the Genesis, SNES, Sega CD, and numerous other systems.

Wheel of Fortune Family Edition

PUBLISHER: Gametek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Wheel of Fortune Family Edition looks and plays virtually identical to the original NES version of *Wheel of Fortune*, but with all new puzzles (more than 1,000 in all) and the addition of three new puzzle categories: things (note the plural usage), fictional person, and same name (two names or phrases both ending in a com-

mon word). Despite the misleading title, *Family Edition* does not include any additional modes of play or other special features, making it something of a disappointment.

Wheel of Fortune Featuring Vanna White

PUBLISHER: Gametek. DEVELOPER: Gametek/Imagitec Design. Game Show, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Wheel of Fortune Featuring Vanna White plays a lot like the other NES versions of *Wheel of Fortune*, but is enhanced by the endorsement of the beautiful Vanna White, who appears via a static close-up shot during the game's intro. In addition, during actual gameplay, that's supposed to be her turning letters. Players can now select from different characters (as opposed to simply entering their names) who appear in a row of three before an angled wheel (in the other versions, the wheel is flat, and no contestants are shown). There are more than 2,000 questions, spread between 10 categories: person, people, phrase, place, event, title, thing, things, fictional person, and same name. A popular staple of the TV game show, Vanna White made her *Wheel of Fortune* debut in 1982.

Wheel of Fortune Junior Edition

PUBLISHER: Gametek. DEVELOPER: Rare. Game Show, 1–3 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Wheel of Fortune Junior Edition looks and plays virtually identical to the original NES *Wheel of Fortune*, but the word puzzles are geared toward younger players (the cartridge is recommended for gamers ages seven and up). Two additional categories are included: things (note the plural usage) and fictional person, but there are still just over 1,000 puzzles. An enormously popular game show, *Wheel of Fortune* began on daytime television in 1975.

Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Distinctive Software. Educational/History/First-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1991.

Packaged with a paperback New American Desk Encyclopedia, *Where in Time Is Car-*

men Sandiego? for the NES is based on the 1989 Broderbund computer game (which spawned a PBS game show). Players travel through time via a Chronoskimmer 325i to collect the clues and warrants necessary to capture and arrest Carmen Sandiego and her henchmen, who have stolen historical artifacts. To determine the crooks' whereabouts, players interview eyewitnesses and informants and use a scanner to locate objects. To obtain arrest warrants, players use clues detailing the crooks' interests and physical attributes. The left half of the screen shows the various locales, characters, and objects while the right half shows the point-and-click menus and other text (including educational info on historical figures). Also released for the SNES and Genesis. See also: *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* (Master System).

Where's Waldo?

PUBLISHER: THQ Software. DEVELOPER: Bethesda Softworks. Educational/General, 1 player. 1991.

Based on the popular book series (which debuted in 1987), *Where's Waldo?* for the NES is divided into four modes of play. Search the Scene for Waldo is conventional in nature as players try to spot the miniaturized, bespectacled fellow in five busy scenes: Train Station, Forest, Fairground, City, and Castle. The Cave Search has players using a flashlight to look for Waldo while The Subway Search is a hunt for Waldo's glasses within a maze of octagons. Finally, The Moon Match-Up is a slot machine-type of game where players spin rows of historical characters and Waldo himself. A poor fit for the NES, *Where's Waldo?* suffers from lousy graphics (making it hard to find Waldo) and dull gameplay. See also: *The Great Waldo Search* (NES).

Who Framed Roger Rabbit

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Rare. Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

Based on the 1988 feature film (which melded animation with live action), *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* for the NES is a mystery adventure in which players assume the role of

Eddie Valiant, a detective who must search four areas (Downtown L.A., the City Park, the Warehouse District, and ToonTown) for clues to prove Roger Rabbit's innocence. This involves exploring caves and woods, searching buildings and rooms, questioning passersby, hitching rides with Benny the Cab, and using a variety of items (bombs, boxing gloves, pies, cigars, baseballs, and the like) to battle or distract snakes, dogs, weasels, and other enemies. The game features two viewpoints: overhead and side-view. Also released for the Game Boy.

Whomp 'Em

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

In *Whomp 'Em*, each time the running, jumping Indian Brave Soaring Eagle (the character players control) completes a world, he will gain a totem, such as a fire wand, a cloud (for flying), an ice crystal (which freezes enemies), or a web (for snaring enemies). The game has good controls and a nice variety of obstacles and platforms to negotiate and creatures to confront, including gremlins, flying dragons, and octopi. Killing certain enemies reveals magic items, including those that can increase the length and attack strength of Soaring Eagle's standard spear weapon. Worlds to travel through include: Sacred Woods, Magic Forest, Water Test, Secret Cliff, Ice Ritual, and Fire Test (plus an unknown world).

Widget

PUBLISHER: Atlus. DEVELOPER: Atlus. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1992.

Like *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, *Widget* is an environmentally themed cartoon series that began in 1990. *Widget* the video game puts players in the titular role of a big-headed, four-foot-tall, purple alien who is dedicated to protecting all living creatures on Earth. Gameplay evokes *Mega Man* (but is easier), with players walking along, jumping on platforms, and shooting snakes, bats, bears, pigs, hawks, and other creatures with large round bullets (which makes one question *Widget*'s aforementioned dedication to preserving all life). To make it past certain areas, *Widget*

can transform into the following: a Cannon (for executing powerful attacks); a Mouse (for crawling through tight areas); a Rock Man (for punching through certain obstacles); a Bird Man (for flying); and a Dolphin (for swimming). Grabbing various items improves the speed and power of *Widget*'s firing mechanism. Followed by: *Super Widget* (SNES).

Wild Gunman

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1985.

Released early in the life of the NES, *Wild Gunman* is a fun, simple, Old West-style shootout that requires the use of Nintendo's Zapper light gun. In the first mode of play, gamers face a single gunman, who draws his gun and says "fire." Players must wait until the gunman draws before they can fire their gun. The second mode is similar to the first, but with two onscreen gunmen. The third and final mode borrows from *Hogan's Alley*, with players firing away at outlaws that pop up in windows and in the doorways of buildings.

Willow

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1989.

Based on the 1988 fantasy film, this nicely crafted game puts players in control of little person Willow Ufgood, who must save the world from the dark magic of Bavmorda. Gameplay is similar to *The Legend of Zelda* (complete with overhead view), but is more of a pure RPG. As Willow explores the vast areas, talking to people and using magic spells and a variety of swords (and shields) to kill ghosts, zombies, blobs, trolls, and other enemies, he will gain points in three areas: experience, magic, and health. At first, Willow's jabbing, slashing sword swings slowly, but it gets faster with experience points gained. Capcom released a *Willow* arcade game the same year, but it features side-scrolling combat/platforming action.

Win, Lose or Draw

PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions. DEVELOPER:

RSP. Game Show, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Based on the popular TV game show, which aired from 1987 to 1990, *Win, Lose or Draw* has two teams competing to guess what is being drawn onscreen, either by the computer or by a player. The quicker a player guesses the right answer, the more points he or she will earn. The computer draws expertly (making the game a bit easy in one-player mode), but players may have a hard time guessing what other players are drawing. Options include male and female teammates, a practice mode, and a password feature that helps prevent repetitious answers. *Win, Lose or Draw* is similar to the board game *Pictionary*, which was published in 1985.

Winter Games

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Pony. Sports/Olympics, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1987.

Introduced by the Olympic theme song, the lighting of the torch, and the releasing of the white doves (otherwise known as the Opening Ceremonies), *Winter Games* for the NES is based on the Commodore 64 computer game (1985), but only has four events (compared to six in the C64 game and eight in various other computer versions). Events include: Hot Dog Aerials (ski-jumping with flips and stunts); Speed Skating (side-view/split-screen racing against the computer or an opponent); Figure Skating (arena ice skating with various jumps and spins); and Bobsled (negotiating twists and turns while sledding down a mountain). By all accounts, this is a disappointing port, thanks to poor controls (especially in Figure Skating), shoddy graphics (including mono-colored contestants), primitive sounds, and the lack of an eight-player mode (which did show up in the superior Atari 7800 version). Also released for the Atari 2600.

Wizardry — Knight of Diamonds: The Second Scenario

PUBLISHER: ASCII. DEVELOPER: Game Studio. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1992.

The follow-up to *Wizardry—Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord*, *Knight of Diamonds* offers the same type of text-initiated, turn-based battles and dungeon crawling action. The mission this time out is to retrieve the lost staff of Gilda, which is needed for projecting a protective force field over the City of Llylgamyn. Gameplay consists of: making selections from text menus; creating a party of six adventurers (fighters, magic users, and a thief); buying weapons and armor at Boltac's Trading Post; exploring a maze-like, six-floor dungeon (mapping the quest on 20 × 20 graph paper is recommended); searching for treasure chests; killing monsters to gain experience points; and much more. Players can create up to 20 good, neutral, and/or evil characters (races include humans, dwarves, elves, gnomes, and hobbits), but only six can join the party. Includes battery backup. Based on the popular computer game, *Knight of Diamonds* was followed by numerous sequels for various systems, including *Wizardry V: Heart of the Maelstrom* for the SNES.

Wizardry — Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord

PUBLISHER: Nexoft. DEVELOPER: Game Studio. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1990.

Based on the groundbreaking Apple II computer game (1981), *Wizardry—Proving Grounds* for the NES invites players to assemble a party of six characters from the following classes: fighters, thieves, clerics, wizards, humans, elves, bishops, mages, dwarves, hobbits, and gnomes. The objective is to retrieve an amulet stolen by the Great Wizard Werdna. This involves: exploring maze-like dungeons (depicted by brick walls); purchasing armor, magic, and weapons (swords, shields, daggers, and the like); initiating turn-based battles with monsters in order to gain experience points; finding secret doors and trapped treasure chests; avoiding pitfalls, traps, and other obstacles; and much more. The graphics are sparse (there's lots of text and a few still shots, but no animation), and it is recommended that players map out their adventure using 20 × 20 graph paper. Includes battery backup.

Wizards & Warriors

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1987.

Wizards & Warriors puts players in the role of Kuros, who must brave dangerous woods, caves, secret tunnels, underground passageways, and Castle IronSpire in order to rescue the proverbial princess. Kuros uses his Brightsword to fend off skulls, ghosts, goblins, werewolves, and other enemies. Finding and collecting the right items (magic, keys, torches, daggers, axes, cloaks, potions, and the like) is crucial in beating each level. Plenty of precise platform jumping is required as well. *Wizards & Warriors* is a steep challenge that fans of *Ac-traiser* and *Ghosts 'n Goblins* will enjoy. Followed by: *IronSword: Wizards & Warriors II* (NES).

Wizards & Warriors III, Kuros: Visions of Power

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Rare. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1992.

The sequel to *IronSword: Wizards & Warriors II*, this game adds a decidedly different wrinkle to the *Wizards & Warriors* franchise, though the creature stabbing and perilous platforming action remain intact. Kuros begins as a knight in shining armor, but can find statues and perform certain tasks to turn into the following characters: a thief (equipped with a dagger, a crow bar, and a skeleton key); a wizard (equipped with fire balls, a force field, and levitation); and a more powerful knight (equipped with a long sword, a throwing axe, and a shooting sword). Of the three games in the series, this one has the best graphics.

Wolverine

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Software Creations. Side-Scrolling Platform/Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1991.

With the release of *Wolverine* for the NES, fan boys nationwide thrilled to the notion of controlling their favorite Marvel mutant. Unfortunately, thanks to a small lead character, sluggish controls, and a really stupid design element (using Wolvie's claws makes him lose strength), the game was a disappointment.

Players guide the rebellious X-Man as he runs, swims, jumps, and crawls his way through nine obstacle- and trap-ridden levels, punching, kicking, and clawing ninjas, droids, zombies, and other enemies along the way. Mutant buddies Shylock, Jubilee, and Havoc provide an occasional assist. Levels, which were created by Sabretooth and his mutant terrorists, include: The First Trial (denoted by machinery and electronics); Trial by Air; Trial by Traps; Trial by Water (an underwater maze); Trial by Terror; Trial by Fire; Into the Fortress; Defeat Magneto; and The Final Battle.

World Champ

PUBLISHER: Romstar. DEVELOPER: Romstar. Sports/Boxing, 1–8 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1991.

This graphically detailed, arcade-style boxing game lacks the strategic aspects of *Punch-Out!!*, but the fun, button-mashing action should appeal to *Ring King* fans. The objective is to beat five ranked opponents in each division: Welterweight, Middleweight, Cruiserweight, and Heavyweight. Winning fights (including sparring in the gym) earns points to increase your boxer's speed, stamina, defense, and punch. Upgrades can be saved via password, and a special Tournament mode lets up to eight gamers square off in a bracketed tournament. The elevated view is from the side, and the screen scrolls right and left to show the entire ring. A referee with a scratchy voice appears before each round and after knockdowns.

World Class Track Meet

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Bandai. Sports/Track & Field, 1–6 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1988.

A re-release of Bandai's *Stadium Events* (only the title screen and certain other bits of text were changed), *World Class Track Meet* was packaged with Nintendo's Power Pad, which was a re-release of Bandai's Family Fun Fitness control mat (Nintendo forced *Stadium Events* and the Family Fun Fitness mat off the market once they began producing the items under different names). The cartridge contains four events: 100M Dash, 110M Hurdles, Long Jump,

and Triple Jump, each requiring the use of the Power Pad. The events are viewed from behind, with players (standing alone or side by side with a second player) hopping, stepping, jogging in place, and otherwise pressing buttons on the mat with their feet in order to get the on-screen characters to run and jump. The game is also available via the 3-in-1 *Super Mario Bros./Duck Hunt/World Class Track Meet* cartridge.

World Games

PUBLISHER: Milton Bradley. DEVELOPER: Rare. Sports/Miscellaneous, 1–8 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1989.

Based on the Epyx computer program, *World Games* for the NES is comprised of eight different sporting events from around the world: Weight Lifting (Russia), Barrel Jumping (Germany), Cliff Diving (Mexico), Slalom Skiing (France), Log Rolling (Canada), Bull Riding (America), Caber Toss (Scotland), and Sumo Wrestling (Japan). Depending on the event, players must press the control pad arrows in rhythm, time button presses precisely, hold buttons down, and perform other such specialized control techniques. Gameplay is straightforward and entertaining, and the inclusion of national anthems, a practice mode, and a travelogue gives the cartridge added weight.

Wrath of the Black Manta

PUBLISHER: Taito. DEVELOPER: Kyugo Trading. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1990.

In *Wrath of the Black Manta*, players control the titular hero, a running, jumping, dart-throwing, sword-wielding ninja hell bent on rescuing innocents and stopping such criminals as kidnappers, robots, thugs, drug runners, and terrorists. Black Manta can also crouch, turn somersaults, and open doors. After completing each of the game's five levels, Manta earns additional abilities, including: Fire Rain, which paralyzes enemies; Shadow, which brings forth a second Manta; and Invisibility, which makes Manta temporarily disappear. Levels include: New York City (city streets and underground sewers); Tokyo, Japan; Rio De Janeiro, South America; New York City (ware-

houses and underground tunnels); and DRAT Headquarters. Varied weaponry gives the action some level of strategy, but the similar (yet more popular) *Ninja Gaiden* is a superior take on this type of game.

Wrecking Crew

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Climbing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1985.

A system launch title, *Wrecking Crew* has Mario and Luigi running and climbing in the interiors of buildings (which are viewed from the side), using hammers to destroy walls and knock away monsters. Demolishing all the walls clears a level, but oil drum barriers, fireball obstacles, and pesky enemies (Eggplant Man, Gotchaman, and others) conspire to make things difficult. Mario and Luigi can also use dynamite (for defeating enemies and knocking down several walls in a row), trap enemies behind doors, trap enemies in gaps in the floor, capture monsters in drums, and find letters to spell out their names (for extra lives). There are 100 puzzle-like screens, and players can design their own levels. The action is relatively simple in nature (Mario and Luigi can't jump, for example), but fun and addictive.

Wurm: Journey to the Center of the Earth

PUBLISHER: Asmik. DEVELOPER: Asmik. Multi-Genre Game, 1 player. 1991.

Wurm puts players at the helm of a multi-configuration vehicle that is designed for underground exploration and is equipped with the following weapons: cyclone drill, double and triple Gatling gun, laser gun, hyper cannon, Doppler cannon, hydrosonic water cannon, and melt needle. The action is divided into four types of play: Horizontal Scroll Shooting (which includes tank mode, hover mode, and aerial mode); Vertical Scroll Shooting (featuring an overhead view of the Wurm); Cockpit Shooting/Role Playing (guide crosshairs to search for and destroy monsters, communicate with crew); and Shooting Adventure/Role Playing (get out of the vehicle to run, jump, shoot, kick, and communicate). Cinematic cut scenes play between each of the game's 20 levels.

WWF King of the Ring

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Eastridge Technology. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

The fourth and final WWF game for the NES, *King of the Ring* features the typical One-on-One, Tag Team, and Tournament matches, but there's a new mode in town: King of the Ring, which is an eight-man single elimination tournament in which each match is a one-fall bout. In addition, there are now three difficulty levels (easy, medium, and hard), and players can customize their own fighter in such categories as strength, speed, and stamina. Selectable wrestlers with pre-determined attributes include: Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, Mr. Perfect, Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels, Yokozuna, the Narcissist Lex Luger, Razor Ramon, Bam Bam Bigelow, and The Undertaker. Wrestling moves include: flying elbow drops, flying dropkicks, head butts, body slams, throws, suplexes, and more. The action is viewed from the side, and the screen scrolls a bit to the left and right. Also released for the Game Boy.

WWF WrestleMania

PUBLISHER: Acclaim. DEVELOPER: Rare. Sports/Wrestling, 1–6 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1989.

The first World Wrestling Federation video game, *WWF WrestleMania* for the NES lets players step into the ring as one of six different professional wrestlers: Hulk Hogan (featured on the box and title screen, ripping his shirt off), Ted “The Million Dollar Man” DiBiase, Bam Bam Bigelow, Honky Tonk Man, Randy “Macho Man” Savage, or Andre the Giant. There is no visible crowd (the background is black), the fighters can't leave the side-view ring (which only takes up the bottom half of the screen), and the button-mashing action isn't as fun as Nintendo's *Pro Wrestling*. However, the fighters are identifiable in the ring (not always a given in the world of 8-bit gaming), and they are accompanied by their theme music. Wrestling moves include: punch, dropkick, body slam, turnbuckle leap, pin, eye gouge, cartwheel, head butt, back elbow smash, flying elbow smash, and more.

Followed by *WWF Super WrestleMania* (Genesis, SNES), along with three NES sequels.

WWF WrestleMania Challenge

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Rare. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1991.

The second World Wrestling Federation video game, *WWF WrestleMania Challenge* keeps only three fighters from *WWF WrestleMania* (Hulk Hogan, Andre the Giant, and Randy Savage), but adds five new ones: Brutus Beefcake, Ravishing Rick Rude, Big Boss Man, Hacksaw Jim Duggan, and Ultimate Warrior. Or, the gamer can decide to play as his or herself, but there is no customization in this regard. The view of the ring is now from a $\frac{3}{4}$ perspective, giving it a diamond-shaped appearance and making certain moves harder to pull off accurately since the angles are tougher to judge. Thankfully, wrestlers can now grapple and fight outside of the ring, and there's even a crowd looking on. Modes of play include: Eight-Man Tournament, One-on-One, Tag Team, Two Players vs. Computer, and Survivor Series (each player captains a three-man team). Followed by: *WWF WrestleMania Steel Cage Challenge*.

WWF WrestleMania Steel Cage Challenge

PUBLISHER: LJN. DEVELOPER: Sculptured Software. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

The third WWF game for the NES, *Steel Cage Challenge* lets players step into the ring as one of 10 different professional wrestlers: Hulk Hogan, “Rowdy” Roddy Piper, Sid Justice, Ted DiBiase, The Mountie, The Undertaker, Bret “Hit Man” Hart, Irwin R. Schyster, Jake “The Snake” Roberts, or Randy Savage. The cartridge includes: four standard match types (One-on-One, Tag Team, Tag Team World Championship Tournament, and Single World Championship Tournament); Cage Matches (in which players need only climb to the top of the cage while the other fighter is down); and a variety of fighting moves, such as elbow drops, body slams, drop kicks, turnbuckle smashes, and flying clotheslines. The cage looks neat

(though the wrestlers are more realistic in *WWF WrestleMania*), and Howard “The Fink” Finkel is on hand to introduce fights via text balloons and a static head shot. Also released for the Sega Game Gear. Followed by: *WWF King of the Ring*.

Xenophobe

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft. DEVELOPER: Sunsoft. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

In *Xenophobe*, players walk, crawl, crouch, and jump through eight eight-room space stations, firing a pulse gun at H.R. Geiger-inspired aliens sporting such names as snotterpillers, spiderions, and giant slime amoebas. Electric walls and slime dripping from ceilings should be avoided, and players can pick up additional weaponry (laser pistol, lightning gun, smoke gun, and bombs) and such items as documents, ID cards, and coffee (for health and points). The game is a pale port of the Bally/Midway coin-op semi-classic (1987), thanks to: the lack of a three-player (split-screen) mode; the absence of rapid fire (a bullet must disappear or hit its target before another one can be shot); the inability to shoot diagonally; fewer enemy types; smaller groups of attacking enemies; and washed-out graphics. There are three playable characters (as opposed to nine in the arcade version): Dr. Kwack, Mr. Fogg, and Dr. Zordiz (misspelled Zordirz). The Atari 7800 rendition of *Xenophobe* isn’t much to look at either, but rapid fire and four difficulty levels make it a more enjoyable port. Also released for the Atari 2600 and Atari Lynx.

Xevious

PUBLISHER: Bandai. DEVELOPER: Namco. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1988.

In *Xevious*, players fly a Solvalou fighter plane over forests, roads, and lakes, firing anti-aircraft missiles at attack drones, corkscrew attack planes, and other airborne enemies. Players can also drop bombs on such surface targets as amphibious vehicles and floating fortresses. This dual firing technique was wholly original in the arcade version of *Xevious* (Atari, 1982),

but was a well-worn (if still enjoyable) formula by the time of the NES release. Although a fine port, the NES version does have weaker explosions, a simplified title screen, and, like the Atari 7800 rendition, less distance between the bomb sight indicator and the Solvalou. Interestingly, the NES rendition takes up the entire screen while the 7800 version is matted at the top and on the sides, the latter narrowing the playfield to make it more arcade-like. *Xevious*, which was also released for the Game Boy Advance, spawned an arcade sequel (*Super Xevious*) and a PlayStation remake (*Xevious 3-D/G+*).

Xexyz

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft. DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft. Platform Shooter/Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Divided into platforming and side-scrolling shooter levels, the post apocalyptic (circa 2777) *Xexyz* puts players in the role of Apollo, who uses his space battle suit to confront the forces of evil on Earth’s five remaining islands: Ruins, Forest, Crystals, Lakes, and Volcano. The platform areas pit man (and his hand beams, typhoons, wave balls, moon balls, mirror image of himself, and other purchasable weapons) against mechanical monsters while the airborne scenes offer *Gradius*-style shooting action. Entering doorways and searching for force stars to get into the mechanical castle adds some depth to the game. Includes password feature. Fans of *Air Fortress* (NES) and *Keith Courage in Alpha Zones* (TurboGrafx-16) may enjoy *Xexyz*.

Yo! Noid

PUBLISHER: Capcom. DEVELOPER: Capcom. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

“Avoid the Noid” was the phrase the Domino’s Pizza chain wanted consumers to remember back in the day, but this game is a forgettable exercise in frustration. Players control the floppy-eared, company anti-mascot Noid as he runs, jumps, and otherwise works his way through New York City (including Central Park, the Bronx, rooftops, and a wharf), using a yo-yo and various magical powers to defeat

pirates, flying fish, barrel throwers, and other enemies. Obstacles include slippery floors, fire, cannon balls, and more. Depending on the level, Noid will commandeer a hyperboard, a pizza crusher, and an ornithopter. Includes pizza-eating bonus rounds. Despite its variety, *Yo! Noid* should be avoided.

Yoshi

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Game Freak. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Yoshi puts players in the role of Nintendo's main man Mario, who scurries back and forth along the bottom of the screen, using trays to catch four different characters (Little Goomba, Blooper, Piranha Plant, and Boo Buddy) and two different types of Yoshi eggs: upper halves and lower halves. Matching a pair of characters makes them disappear, as does trapping characters between egg halves. In split-screen mode, the second player controls Luigi. *Yoshi* borrows elements of play from *Tetris*, but is shallower than such puzzlers as *Columns*, *Tetris Attack*, and *Yoshi's Cookie*. Chain reactions are nonexistent, for example.

Yoshi's Cookie

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Bullet Proof Software. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.



The NES library is nothing if not diverse, evidenced in part by such titles as *Yoshi's Cookie* (a puzzler), *The Little Mermaid* (an adventure game aimed at younger players), *Pinball* (a straightforward rendition of the popular pastime), and *Ninja Gaiden* (a hardcore hack-'n'-slash title).

Starring Mario's dinosaur buddy, *Yoshi's Cookie* turns the "disappearing object" game-play conceit established by *Tetris* into something highly original. Players use a cursor to shift horizontal rows and vertical columns of randomly sequenced cookies, making a row or column disappear when all the cookies in that line are of the same type. In one-player mode, Yoshi cookies act as wild cards, but in two-player split-screen mode, which is a race for points, they are used to scramble cookies, form shields, control the other player's cursor, and add or subtract points. Gamers can play as Mario, Yoshi, the Princess, or Bowser. The SNES version of this fun, strategic puzzler includes the following enhancements: background graphics, a special Puzzle mode, and Mario character designs from *Super Mario World*. Also released for the Game Boy.

The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles

PUBLISHER: Jaleco. DEVELOPER: Jaleco/LucasArts. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1992.

Based on the television adventure series (1992–1996), *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* for the NES lets players guide a fresh-faced Indy through Mexico, France, and Germany (including cliffs, deserts, a weapons facility, a railway, silver mine, and other areas), battling such enemies as guard dogs, snakes, tanks, and

German soldiers. Indy can equip dynamite, bombs, handguns, knives, machine guns, and his trusty whip, the latter of which makes the action somewhat similar to *Castlevania*. Unfortunately, Indy can only carry one weapon at a time (in addition to his fists). Other helpful items include gas mask, torch, flashlight, statue of power (for freezing enemies), and magic amulet (for temporary invincibility). At certain points, Indy will ride a motorcycle, commandeer a tank, and fly a plane, lending variety to the relatively straightforward platforming action. Young Indy also starred in *Instruments of Chaos* Starring

Young Indiana Jones (Genesis) and *Indiana Jones: Greatest Adventures* (SNES).

Zanac

PUBLISHER: FCI. DEVELOPER: Compile. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

This tough-as-nails, thoroughly engaging shooter boasts a sophisticated form of artificial intelligence called ALC (Automatic Level of Difficult Control Function), which varies the number and difficulty of the enemies based on the skill of the player. Each enemy type moves in a set intricate pattern, and they appear in different places with every new game. The player's ship boasts eight different weapons (circular, plasma flash, two types of smart bombs, and the like), and there are 12 levels of play. Weapon power-ups and timed bosses add to the fun.

Zelda II: The Adventure of Link

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1988.

Although not as widely praised as *The Legend of Zelda*, *Zelda II* remains a classic in its own right. Players once again guide a sword-swinging, shield-wielding Link through the vast, labyrinthine areas of Hyrule (roads, plains, forests, seas, rivers, deserts, swamps, mountains, and bridges), but this time the action scenes feature a side-scrolling perspective instead of an overhead view. In addition, Link now gains experience points after defeating monsters. Eight types of magic enable Link to fly, throw fireballs, and more. Includes battery backup. Followed by *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (SNES), *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (Nintendo 64), and numerous other sequels.

Zen: Intergalactic Ninja

PUBLISHER: Konami. DEVELOPER: Konami. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1993.

Based on the comic book series, *Zen: Intergalactic Ninja* is one of several environmentally aware NES games (along with such titles as *Captain Planet* and *Toxic Crusaders*). Armed with a photon-stick, the titular do-gooder must

run, jump, and jab his way through five levels (Acid Rain Forest, Slixxon Oil Rig, Biggs Toxic Factory, Runaway Railcar, and Rescue Mission), battling an assortment of "pollution-powered pests." There are fires to extinguish, workers to rescue, walls to scale, and more. Certain areas are viewed from an isometric perspective. Guest-starring Jeremy the Starchilde, Sulfra, Oil Slick, Smogger, Garbage-man, and Lord Contaminous. Includes bonus stage in which players catch recyclable materials to recreate allies Lawn Ranger, Pulp, Bottle Bandit, Can-It, and Lights-Out, each of which provides a shield, an extra life, or other such bonus item.

Zoda's Revenge: StarTropics II

PUBLISHER: Nintendo. DEVELOPER: Nintendo. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1994.

One of the last NES releases, *Zoda's Revenge* sticks to the basic gameplay of the original *StarTropics* (overhead-view puzzle solving, dungeon-based monster battling), but has better graphics and outfits Mike with an axe instead of a yoyo. Other new weapons and items include a dagger, a katana, shockwaves, a flute (for charming snakes), and more. The adventure takes Mike, who can now move and fire diagonally and turn around more quickly, on a nine-chapter trip through time, where he will visit such locales as Egypt, London, Italy, and Transylvania, and interact with such figures as Cleopatra, Sherlock Holmes, and Leonardo da Vinci. Includes battery backup. Similar to: *The Legend of Zelda*.

Zombie Nation

PUBLISHER: Meldac. DEVELOPER: Live Planning. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1991.

The "futuristic" (1999) storyline for *Zombie Nation* is an odd amalgamation of a meteor crashing to Earth (and the resultant zombies), an alien named Darc Seed, a samurai, and an animated Statue of Liberty. Players control a holographic head as it travels through four nicely illustrated levels (New York City, The Grand Canyon, The Oil Fields of Texas, and The Underground Caverns of the North Central U.S), firing projectiles from its eyes and

mouth. Destroying buildings, mountains, zombies, tanks, helicopters, zeppelins, robots, water snakes, and everything else in an area frees

hostages, powering up the disembodied head with double fire, triple fire, and smart bombs. *Zombie Nation* is weird, but highly playable.

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

Originally released in Japan in 1985 as the Sega Mark III, the Sega Master System hit the U.S. in June of 1986, which was less than a year after the stunningly popular Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) made its debut. Designed to compete with Nintendo's juggernaut of a console, which single handedly revived the video game industry in America, the Master System never came close to dethroning its chief rival, thanks in part to the lack of third-party support. Despite the short lead time, Nintendo had already wrapped up exclusive licensing agreements with most of the larger third-party software developers, leaving the Master System out in the cold (though Activision and Parker Brothers did release a few titles for the SMS).

Regarding the unit itself, the Master System is a wide, but narrow black console with a cartridge slot, pause button, reset button, and burgundy label on top and a power button, two controller ports, and a card slot on the front. While most Master System games were produced in a standard cartridge format, several were released as Sega Cards, which were credit card-sized media that were cheaper to manufacture and were capable of holding fewer bits of game code (256K bits for the cards compared to 1048K for the cartridges). In 1990, Sega released the Sega Master System II, which was a scaled down, budget-conscious Master System that lacked the card slot, reset button, and power light. The SMSII also removed the logo/music

intro that would appear on the television screen when the unit was turned on.

The Master System controller design mimics the NES control pad to some degree, but the directional-pad isn't as tight and doesn't feel as precise (in terms of directing onscreen images) as its NES counterpart. In addition, there are only two buttons on the SMS controller, compared to four on the more functional NES controller. Since the pause button is on the SMS console instead of the controller (ala the Atari 7800), players are oftentimes inconvenienced by having to get up (or at least reach over) to pause a game, especially when playing such titles as *Alex Kidd in Miracle World*, in which the pause button plays a role beyond simply freezing the action (pressing pause in *Miracle World* brings up a subscreen containing a map, list of possessions, number of lives, current score, and amount of money the player has).

One of the coolest things about the Master System is the Sega 3-D Glasses, which are compatible with such dazzlingly visual games as *Zaxxon 3-D* and *Space Harrier 3-D*. The glasses, which look cool (at least in a geek chic kind of way) and plug into the console card slot (meaning SMSII owners are out of luck), fit comfortably, not unlike a pair of thick, plastic sunglasses. To produce the illusion of three-dimensional on-screen imagery, the lenses house LCD shutters that create a flickering effect by rapidly opening and closing over opposite eyes



A boxed Sega Master System console, which Sega dubbed an “Interactive Video Entertainment System.”

in synchronized fashion. Unlike the headache-inducing Virtual Boy (Nintendo’s failed 3D system from 1995), the Sega 3-D Glasses cause little or no disorientation or other side effects.

The other prominent peripheral released for the Master System is the Sega Light Phaser, which was modeled after the gun from *Zillion*, the Japanese anime series. The black, solidly built pistol plugs into the joystick port and is compatible with such games as *Shooting Gallery* and *Marksman Shooting/Trap Shooting*. The latest addition to the line of Master System gadgets is the Sega Sports Pad, which is a sluggish, unresponsive trackball controller that is compatible with *Great Ice Hockey* and the much-maligned *Sports Pad Football*. Other SMS-related products of note include: the Sega Control Stick, which is a joystick with a bulky knob on the end; the Sega Rapid Fire Unit, which is an extender cord that gives the standard controller rapid firing capabilities; the Power Base Converter, which lets gamers plug

in and play Master System cartridges on the Sega Genesis; and the MasterGear Converter, which lets gamers plug in and play Master System cartridges on the Sega Game Gear.

The Master System’s sports lineup is largely dreadful, and the game library as a whole is much smaller than that of the NES, but the system does have a number of stand-out arcade conversions, including *R-Type*, *Rastan*, *Columns*, and *Time Soldiers*, and some nifty original titles, such as *Alex Kidd in Shinobi World*, *Phantasy Star*, *Penguin Land*, and *Zaxxon 3-D* (a sequel to Sega’s arcade classic, *Zaxxon*). In addition, though there were only 114 titles released in the U.S., the NTSC format Master System is compatible with the PAL format European console, expanding the library substantially (at least for those willing to purchase imported games). Both American and European cartridges are housed in a sturdy, plastic casing (often called a clamshell case), a design Sega carried over to the next-generation



Sega Master System console with two controllers and Light Phaser gun. Though a solid system, the SMS couldn't compete with Nintendo's NES, which benefited from better marketing, better packaging, and more third-party support.

Genesis console (1989), which was the company's 16-bit follow-up to the 8-bit Master System.

Today, though the console was officially discontinued in 1992, the Sega Master System has experienced a revival of sorts via the Nintendo Wii Virtual Console, which lets players download an assortment of pixel-perfect Master System titles to their Wii. Though nowhere near as ubiquitous or as mainstream as the NES, the Master System does maintain a respectable presence in the collector's market, frequently changing hands via eBay, video game conventions, and online and brick-and-mortar gaming stores.

Sega Master System Games

Action Fighter

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Demolition/Combat Racing/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

Despite its title, *Action Fighter* is not a fighting contest. Rather, it's based on Sega's arcade racer/shooter of the same name (1986).

The game is similar to *Spy Hunter* (sans the defensive oil slicks and smokes screens), with players driving up roadways (viewed from overhead), firing away at other vehicles while trying to avoid getting bumped into walls. Players begin on a motorcycle (the same one from *Hang-On*), but can grab letters to transform the vehicle into a car and a jet plane (the arcade version, which benefited from steering wheel control, also let players pilot a helicopter, a boat, and a racecar). The jet plane portions evoke *Xevious*. Docking with a Sega Truck (which is similar to the weapons van in *Spy Hunter*) gives the motorcycle or car dual firing, auto-missiles, or temporary invincibility. *Action Fighter*, which features five timed missions, is fast and fun, but crashing into walls is far too easy.

Aerial Assault

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sanritsu Denki. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

A typical 8-bit side-scroller, *Aerial Assault* has players piloting the Freedom Fighter plane over land and sea, shooting, bombing, and/or dodging jets, helicopters, rockets, submarines,



Two Master System–related peripherals: the Sega Control Stick, which could substitute for a standard control pad; and the Power Base Converter, which let gamers play Master System titles on the Sega Genesis.

jeeps, tanks, ships, parachute bombs, cyborgs, giant flying insects, heat-seeking missiles, fireballs, lightning, and other enemies and obstacles. Shooting certain enemies emits different types of symbols, which can be grabbed to enhance the Freedom Fighter's weaponry. Standard upgrades include: 3-way shot, 8-way shot, laser, wide laser, chaser missile, explosion shot, increase shot, and direction shot. Bomb power-ups include: triple bomb, missile, napalm, and hyper ball. Speed, extra lives, and shields are also available, though players should be careful not to grab skeletons. There are four missions: Destroy the Battleship "Vinsk"; Destroy the CB-53 Bomber; Destroy the Cliff Fortress; and Enter the N. A. C. Fortress and Destroy "EL"! The latter stage is indoors, meaning there are walls, ceilings, and floors to avoid. Also released for the Game Gear.

After Burner

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

The original arcade version of *After Burner* (Sega, 1987) wowed gamers with its razzle-dazzle graphics and its enclosed cabinet, which sported a rotating seat and cockpit. Naturally, the Master System game, though a respectable port, can't hope to recreate this excitement, leaving in its place a playable, yet

repetitive shooter. Cast in the role of a Navy Air Captain, gamers view the action from behind their F-14 Thunder Cat, which is armed with a Vulcan cannon and air-to-air guided missiles, the latter of which has a sight that automatically locks onto enemy fighters, jets, and helicopter gunships. The Thunder Cat can move left, right, up, down, and diagonally, and it can perform a rolling maneuver, but it stays near the center of the screen during flight (the sky and horizon tilt and spin in accordance with the jet's turns and rolls). Bonus stages let players refuel and battle a Flying Fortress. Also released for the NES and Sega 32X. Sequels include: *After Burner II* (arcade, Genesis), *After Burner III* (Sega CD), *After Burner Climax* (arcade), and *After Burner: Black Falcon* (PSP).

Alex Kidd: High-Tech World

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Adventure/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

The third title in the quartet of *Alex Kidd* cartridges for the Master System, *High Tech World* is a major departure from the straightforward platforming action of the other games. The objective is to find a map (to an arcade) that has been torn into eight pieces and hidden in a castle. This involves such activities as entering rooms, talking to characters, answering

trivia questions, climbing ladders and stairs, backtracking, and solving puzzles. After leaving the castle on a hang glider, Alex must journey through an action-oriented forest area, jumping on tree branch platforms, crossing a pond, and shooting at ninjas. There's also an animal forest (which also contains ninjas) and a village to traverse, the latter of which finds Alex — on a mission to locate a travel pass — encountering a fast food restaurant, an antique shop, and a pawn shop. The game is short (if potentially frustrating), and the music is repetitious, but at least the graphics are nice and colorful. Includes password feature. Released the same year as *Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle* (arcade, Genesis).

Alex Kidd in Miracle World

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1986.

Before Sonic the Hedgehog, Alex Kidd was the closest thing Sega had to a Mario-style mascot. In this, his first adventure, Kidd must run, jump, swim, and squat his way through 11 locations in Miracle World (including Lake Fathom, Mt. Kave, and The Blakwoods), using a short-range punching maneuver to destroy monster birds, flying fish, grizzly bears, octopi, monkeys, and other enemies. Alex can also destroy stone blocks (in order to get past them), discover special treasures, and purchase such items as a cane of flight, a power bracelet (for shooting enemies), magic capsules (for calling on help in the form of friends or a barrier shield), and two different vehicles: a motorcycle (which goes fast and breaks blocks) and a peticopter (which fires missiles). When Kidd gets to the river, he will use a speed boat to cross the water. Boss battles are in the form of scissors/paper/stone, which is a dumb idea, and having to press pause on the console to access items is a hassle. However, nice level design, rock

solid platforming, and variety galore make *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* an all-time classic.

Alex Kidd in Shinobi World

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

A parody of sorts of Sega's *Shinobi*, which is a popular ninja game, *Alex Kidd in Shinobi World* was the last game in the *Alex Kidd* series, featuring the type of *Super Mario Bros.*-style platforming action established by *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* (which was the first game in the series). Players guide Kidd as he runs, jumps, climbs (up ladders, poles, and ropes), squats, slashes (with a sword), and shoots his way through 12 levels of jungles, city streets, buildings, caverns, and other ninja-filled locales. There are also underwater areas teeming with hostile marine life. To help him get through the game, Alex can open treasure chests to acquire extra lives, spears, crystal balls (for turning into a tornado), and more. Alex can also pull off such magical moves as skipping across water and turning into a ball of fire. Cartoon-like graphics, good music (which



Three popular Master System titles: *After Burner*, *Space Harrier*, and *Out Run*, each based on a Sega arcade game, and each pictured with box, instruction manual, and cartridge.

melds the *Alex Kidd* and *Shinobi* worlds nicely), and fun (if overly easy) gameplay make this hard-to-find cartridge a winner.

Alex Kidd: The Lost Stars

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

The follow-up to *Alex Kidd in Miracle World*, *Alex Kidd: The Lost Stars* is much easier and more colorfully cartoonish than its progenitor, giving it a reputation as a platformer for younger gamers and disappointing fans of the budding franchise in the process. This time, instead of punching, Kidd shoots cloud shots. There are no vehicles to commandeer, but Alex can grab balloons for flying through the air and grab special stars which let him do the follow-

ing: jump higher and farther, gain extra cloud shots, and fill his life meter (which acts as a timer as well as a health gauge). Magical worlds to run, jump, shoot, and swim through include: Toy World, Machine World, World of Make Believe, Water World, Monster World, and The Giant's Body. Obstacles to avoid include bottomless pits, electric barriers, depth charges, fire-spitting volcanoes, gastric juices, and more. The game lacks the two-player simultaneous mode of its coin-op counterpart, which Sega released in 1986.

Alf

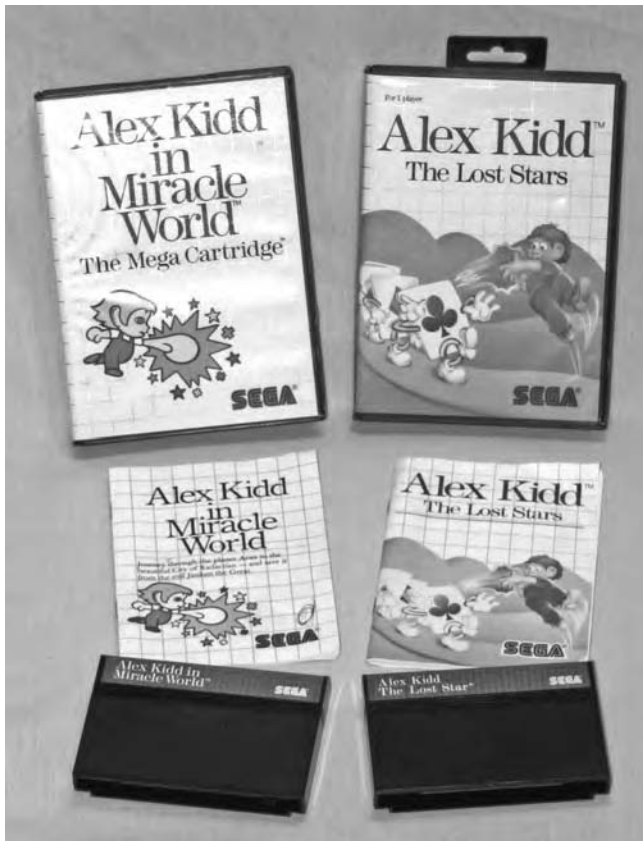
Publisher: Sega. Developer: Nexa. Adventure/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

Based on the popular sitcom, which ran on ABC from 1986 to 1990, *Alf* puts players in control of the titular alien life form: a furry, sarcastic being from the planet Melmac. Alf's mission is to fix his broken space scooter so he can go to Mars to visit his friends, Rhonda and Skip, but he must first find various items, such as: keys to open doors; fuel for his scooter; a cat for scaring rats; a salami for batting bats; and more. Areas to explore include a house, a cave, a street, a lake, and the sky. Unfortunately, flat graphics, jerky animation, horrendous collision detection, and sparse sound effects ruin the experience. The repetitious musical score that flails away at the ears is most definitely *not* the theme from the TV show.

Alien Syndrome

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sanritsu Denki. Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

Despite the disappointing lack of a two-player simultaneous mode (something the NES version of the game retains), *Alien Syndrome* for the Master System is a



Alex Kidd in Miracle World and *Alex Kidd: The Lost Stars* for the Master System, each pictured with box, manual, and cartridge. Prior to Sonic the Hedgehog, Alex Kidd was the closest thing Sega had to a Mario-style mascot.

nice port of Sega's 1986 arcade game. Players, as Ricky or Mary, must walk through the interiors of seven different labyrinthine, multi-room spaceships (viewed from overhead), rescuing hostages while avoiding and shooting aliens (which were clearly inspired by H.R. Giger's designs for the creatures in the *Alien* film franchise). Unlike the NES port, there are no maps, but players can pick up flamethrowers and laser rifles to replace their standard-issue combat rifle. Other items to grab include warps, smart bombs, and temporary invincibility. The objective in each ship is to rescue all the hostages and find the exit prior to the explosion of a time bomb. *Alien Syndrome* is simple, but lots of fun. Also released for the Game Gear. Remade for the PSP and Wii.

Altered Beast

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1989.

When compared to the better playing, better looking Genesis port (of Sega's 1988 arcade game), *Altered Beast* for the Master System is missing a number of features, including the two-player mode, the grizzly bear creature, and all of level three. Cast in the role of a resurrected Roman Centurion, players walk, jump, punch, and kick their way through four short levels, battling headless skeletons, two-headed wolves, goat creatures, and other beasts, grabbing spirit ball power-ups along the way. Said power-ups enable the player to transform into four different creatures: Werewolf, Were-Dragon, Were-Tiger, and Golden Wolf. Each creature has special attacks, such as fireballs, lightning, or bouncing flames. The mission is to rescue Athena, daughter of Zeus, from the clutches of Neff, Lord of the Underworld. Followed by: *Altered Beast: Guardian of the Realm* (Game Boy Advance).

Astro Warrior

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1986.

Despite its formulaic adherence to the genre, this unassuming little shooter is well worth playing. An Astro Raider, at the helm of his upgradeable Astro Warrior ship, must fly

through three levels of play, shooting bullets, triple shots, and lasers at colorfully detailed aliens that attack in patterns. A spiffy looking boss ship lies in wait at the end of each level. Power-ups, including an orb that circles the player's ship and fires the same weaponry, are available via cargo ships. The game continues in a loop after the last boss has been defeated, meaning there is no ending (gunning for a high score is the ultimate objective). *Astro Warrior* could use automatic rapid fire and an innovation or three, but the nuts 'n' bolts gameplay is rock solid.

Aztec Adventure

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Overhead View Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

In *Aztec Adventure*, players guide a slow-moving explorer named Niño on a long, hazardous, labyrinthine quest through forests, marshes, ruins, deserts, and other locales, in hopes of finding the legendary Aztec Paradise. Armed with a sword for battling the many spirits, demons, and beasts that crowd the levels, Niño can also find a spear, iron balls (standard and four-way), fireballs (for burning dangerous trees and flowers), boots (for walking on water), tornados (for defeating tough enemies), lightning (for invincibility), and dynamite (for blowing up moving walls). In addition, there are three special enemies who can be bribed into tagging along and helping. *Aztec Adventure* looks and plays a little bit like *The Legend of Zelda* (at least on the surface), but it lacks the deep gameplay, RPG elements, and overall brilliance of the NES classic.

Black Belt

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1986.

In the highly playable (if stubbornly unoriginal) *Black Belt*, players control a karate expert named Riki, who can walk, punch, kick, squat, and jump (vertically, diagonally, and super high). Each of the standard bad guys, including wrestlers, jujitsu men, Chinese kung fu men, eagles, ninjas, and dark women, can be dispatched with a single hit or kick. However, sub-bosses are a little tougher. Each of the

first five chapters has a boss, such as a sumo wrestler (Gonta), a flamethrower (Rita), or a kung fu master (Wang). Plus, there's a boss-only sixth chapter. Each boss has his or her own strengths and weaknesses, giving players a chance to test their strategic fighting skills as well as their dexterity. Adapted from the Japanese game *Hokuto no Ken*, which is based on *Fist of the North Star* (the anime and manga series). Similar to: *Kung-Fu Master* (arcade) and *Kung Fu* (NES).

Blade Eagle 3-D

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Designed for the SegaScope 3-D Glasses, *Blade Eagle 3-D* is similar to *Vertical Force* for the Virtual Boy, with players piloting a ship up the screen, shooting at aliens and robot drones that exist on three different planes (meaning the player's ship can descend and ascend). Power-ups, including twin shots, a shadow ship (which flies alongside the standard ship), laser beams, and wide-range particle beams, are acquired after defeating certain bosses. Areas to

fly over or through include outer space, planetary surfaces, and the Arvian Fortress. Unfortunately, the game is a three-world, nine-level disaster. Not only is it difficult to tell where the enemies are in relation to your ship, the graphics are unattractive in general. This is easily the worst game for Sega's nifty 3D peripheral.

Bomber Raid

Publisher: Activision. Developer: Sanritsu Denki. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

One of the best shooters for the Master System, *Bomber Raid* is an arcade-quality game in which players fly a fighter plane through five missions, using bullets (which are unlimited) and cluster bombs (which are limited) to blow away tanks, planes, rockets, air mines, warships, and other enemies. Catching P symbols garners extra points, and collecting eight of them increases the fighter plane's firepower. Catching S symbols increases speed while catching number symbols (1–4) brings about helpful squadron planes (ala the wingmen in *1942*) that fly and shoot (at an angle or to the left or right) in unison with the player's standard plane. The levels are short, and the bosses are easy to defeat, but solid shooting action and detailed graphics make up for these shortcomings. Similar to: *Tiger-Heli* (NES).

California Games

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Epyx. Sports/Extreme, 1–8 players (alternating). 1989.

California Games contains all six competitions from the 1987 Epyx computer classic: Half Pipe Skateboarding, a side-view game where players ride back and forth on a ramp, performing kick turns, aerial turns, and hand plants; Foot Bag, a hacky sack contest where players bounce the bag off their head, knees, and feet, doing as many kicks and stunts as possible; Surfing, in which players ride



Martial arts themes were popular during the 1980s, evidenced in part by these Master System titles: *Black Belt*, *Shinobi*, and *The Ninja*, each pictured with box, instruction manual, and cartridge.

a wave while catching air, doing 360s, and avoiding wiping out; Roller Skating, which takes place on a boardwalk cluttered with sand, cracks, banana peels, and runaway beach balls (spinning or jumping over obstacles nets extra points); BMX Bike Racing, a bicycle motocross game where players jump over obstacles and perform wheelies, flips, table tops, and 360s; and Flying Disk, a running, diving, throw-and-catch Frisbee game. Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari Lynx, NES, and Genesis. Followed by: *California Games II* (SNES).

Captain Silver

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

Based on the 1987 Data East arcade game, *Captain Silver* is a disappointment. Unlike the European version, which boasts six levels, the U.S. cartridge has only four (despite the instruction manual claiming there are six levels), making for a short and easy game. Also missing are certain enemies, such as the witch boss and the Banana King. Players, wielding a cutlass sword, must run, jump, hack, and slash their way through pirates, werewolves, seagulls, poisonous frogs, and other foes. Protection potion, clock freeze, keys for opening doors, boots for special jumping abilities, and other helpful items can be found throughout the levels or purchased in shops.

Casino Games

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Gambling/Pinball, 1 player. 1989.

Casino Games offers four solid (if limited, considering the lack of a two-player mode) gambling simulators, plus a basic, but playable pinball game. In Poker, after the dealer deals out five cards, the player can bet, pass, or fold (unfortunately, you can't see the computer player's hand after you fold). Players can also raise the bet, forcing the computer to follow or pass. In Blackjack, only one deck of cards is used, but the

player can double down, split, and buy insurance. Baccarat, in which players place a bet prior to looking at their two cards, uses just one deck as well. Casino Slots contains five traditional slot machines with lucky sevens, bars, bells, blue balls, tomatoes, and cherries. Finally, Pinball offers a single table with three angle options: gentle, middle, and steep. Pretty girls introduce the action in *Casino Games*, and there are four different computer opponents.

Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

The evil witch Mizrabel has kidnapped Minnie, and it's up to Mickey to save her. The intrepid mouse must run, jump, swim, and climb his way through six areas (The Woods, Toy Land, Candy Land, Giant's Den, Clock Tower, and Witch's Tower), pouncing on ghosts, chess knights, haunted trees, juggling clowns, and other enemies. Though equally charming, *Castle of Illusion* for the Master System is quite a bit different than its Genesis counterpart. In the SMS game, Mickey picks up — one at a time — rocks, blocks, spheres, and other items to throw at enemies. In the Genesis version, Mickey throws items as well, but the apples, marbles, and candles are gathered up in quantity like ammo. The bosses and levels exhibit differences as well (the Genesis rendition has a



Three third-party Master System titles: *Bomber Raid*, *Montezuma's Revenge*, and *Rampage*.

Library, but not a Candy Land, for example). Disney and platforming fans will thoroughly enjoy both versions. Also released for the Game Gear.

Choplifter

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

A very nicely realized port of Sega's 1985 arcade game (as opposed to the original Apple II computer version), *Choplifter* for the Master System has players piloting a HAWKZ rescue chopper back and forth over land and sea, firing away at tanks, ships, and fighter planes. Unlike the weaker Atari 7800 rendition, which has less sophisticated graphics and sounds, this busy, highly detailed game also has surface-to-air missiles to avoid. The goal in each level is to rescue at least 40 out of 64 hostages being held in barracks and caverns (in the 7800 version, the game simply ends after 64 hostages have been rescued or killed). This is done by landing near the hostages, letting them climb aboard the chopper, and transporting them to safety. The rescue chopper can maneuver in eight directions and fly at an inclining angle in order to destroy ground targets. The voice effects are gone, but the music sounds terrific. Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, and ColecoVision. Followed by: *Choplifter II* (Game Boy) and *Choplifter III* (SNES, Game Gear).

Cloud Master

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Hot-B. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

In the quirky, yet commonplace *Cloud Master*, a mysterious hermit named Michael Chen rides the wind on a cloud-like chariot, shooting at an odd assortment of enemies, including tigers with shields, bowls of ramen noodles, pig heads, and a boss named Bad Buddha. After destroying a middle boss, Chen can enter a power-up chamber to supplement his arsenal with upgradeable fireballs, dragon fire, crescent shots, and four images of himself. In addition, there are five types of bombs: standard,

bouncing, search, super, and scatter. The shooting action is fairly typical (if enjoyable), but the atypical enemies make the game stand out from the crowd. Adapted from Taito's *Chuka Taisen* (a Japanese arcade game from 1988), *Cloud Master* isn't quite as hard as its coin-op counterpart, but still provides ample challenges.

Columns

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Action Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

First released in the arcades (Sega, 1990), *Columns* is one of the better *Tetris*-inspired puzzlers. As columns consisting of three jewels fall down the screen (one column at a time), making their way to the bottom of the playfield, gamers must maneuver said columns into place (by moving the column left and right, and by arranging the order of the colors within the column). The objective is to create rows of three or more jewels (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally) of the same color in order to eliminate them from the screen. If the stack of jewels reaches the top of the playfield, the game will end. In addition to the standard game, the package includes: split-screen Versus Mode, in which combos (two or more columns disappearing at once) create horizontal blocks on the opponent's playfield; and Flash Game, in which players are timed on making a flashing jewel on the screen disappear. Unlike the arcade and Genesis versions of *Columns*, the surprisingly good Master System rendition lets players use alternatives to jewels, namely squares, playing card symbols, dice, or fruit. Also released for the Game Gear. Similar to: *Klax*.

Cyborg Hunter

Publisher: Activision. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

In *Cyborg Hunter*, players control a bounty hunter named Paladin, who is part man, part machine. Armed with a psychic punch and the ability to run, crouch, jump, and acquire bombs, shields, a jet pack, and other helpful items, Paladin must work his way through the cyborg-infested halls of an enemy base, which is a maze-like series of interconnected sectors

and floors linked by elevators (ala *Metroid*). Defeating a sector boss gives players a key for entering the next area. Interestingly, the primary screen is divided into three sections: map; “3D tunnel-scope” (offering a first-person perspective and warnings of enemies); and standard side-view (where the main action takes place). A second controller is required for accessing the inventory screen. Nice graphics, futuristic music, and a solid blend of action and strategy make *Cyborg Hunter* well worth seeking out.

Dead Angle

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. First-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Dead Angle is an unusual game in which players guide a crosshair around various streets, docks, and hotels of Napoli, New York, and Chicago, firing away at nicely drawn (if chop-pily animated) gangsters, dodging or ducking their fire. What makes the game stand out is the silhouette of the detective protagonist (viewed from behind), allowing players to see their character in relation to enemies and enemy gunfire. The game, which is set in the 1930s, is not Light Phaser compatible, making for clunky control. Surprisingly, the original arcade version of *Dead Angle* (Seibu Kaihatsu, 1988) lacks gun support as well.

Dick Tracy

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Dick Tracy for the Master System is laid out like its Genesis counterpart, but the two-button control limitations and weaker graphics make for a lesser game. Comic strip detective Dick Tracy (who does very little in the way of detecting here) walks through alleys, rail yards, warehouses, and The Ritz, punching and shooting (with pistols and machine guns) such bad guys as Lips Manlis, Flattop, The Brow, and Pruneface.

Certain enemies attack from the background, which is an unusual feature for this type of game. In addition, there are pop-up target bonus rounds and areas where Tracy stands on the running board of a car, shooting enemies and avoiding their fire. Based on the 1990 feature film (which in turn was based on Chester Gould’s comic strip). Much different than the NES version, which includes overhead-view driving sequences, and the Game Boy rendition, which features lots of climbing.

Double Dragon

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Jimmy Lee’s girlfriend, Mary Ann, has been kidnapped by the Black Warrior gang, and it is up to Jimmy and his brother Billy to rescue her. Players guide the street-fighting duo through four levels (The Slums, The Factory District, The Park, and The Black Warriors Headquarters), using weapons (rocks, whips, bats, knives, dynamite, and drums) and a variety of fighting moves (jump kick, leaping re-



Three popular Master System titles: *Double Dragon*, *Alien Syndrome*, and *R-Type*, each a quality port of a classic arcade game, and each complete with box, instruction manual, and cartridge.

verse kick, elbow smash, head butt, uppercut punch, head knee smash, and should throw) to battle bat-toting bad guys, karate masters, whip-wielding women, giants with large heads, and other enemies. Like Taito's 1987 coin-op classic (which inspired numerous sequels and cypcats), this version does include two-player simultaneous action, which is missing from the NES main game. In addition, level design is more faithful, meaning the stalactites from the NES port won't be found here. Unlike the easier NES game, the Master System version has unlimited continues. Also released for the Atari 7800, Game Gear, Genesis, and various other systems.

E-SWAT

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sanritsu Denki.
Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

Like its Genesis counterpart, which is called *ESWAT: City Under Siege*, *E-SWAT* for the SMS is much different than Sega's *ESWAT: Cyber Police*, the 1989 arcade game upon which it is based. *E-SWAT* has different level designs, no two-player mode, smaller sprites, and weaker weaponry (though the game is easier to beat). The *Robocop*-style action has gamers stomping and jumping through five short levels (compared to eight in the Genesis version), blasting robots, bionic monsters, gun turrets, soldiers, ninjas, snipers, hovercraft machines, and other enemies to smithereens. Naturally, the SMS game's graphics pale next to the Genesis and arcade versions. Also, *E-SWAT* for the Master System lacks the jetpack feature found in the Genesis rendition.

Enduro Racer

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Motocross Racing, 1 player. 1987.

Both fast and fun, *Enduro Racer* for the Master System is vaguely similar to its coin-op counterpart (Sega, 1986), but without the benefit of motorcycle-style controls. In addition, the arcade game features a behind-the-biker viewpoint while the console game sports a less conventional isometric perspective. Also unconventional is the Master System version's odd color choice of blue trees. Gamers compete

in 10 timed races through sparsely illustrated natural environments (deserts, water, and the like), dodging such obstacles as signs, boulders, and other vehicles, the latter of which can bump players off the road. Passing vehicles and finishing races scores points that can be used to purchase such upgrades as accelerator tune-ups and better tires. The game's emphasis on ramp-jumping evokes the vastly more popular *Excitebike* (NES).

F-16 Fighting Falcon

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Nexa. Flight Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1986.

The only U.S.-released flight simulator for the Master System, *F-16 Fighting Falcon* awkwardly forces players to use two controllers: one for turning, ascending, descending, and selecting and firing weapons; and the other for speeding up, slowing down, locking on to enemies, using flares, and switching between manual and auto-pilot. Gameplay consists of air-to-air combat (there are no ground targets) against MiG-25 Foxbats (which are findable via radar), with a maximum of three appearing onscreen at any given time. Fuel and ammo, including missiles and 20mm gun bullets, are limited. There are day and nighttime missions (10 levels in all), but the visuals are pathetic. Solid blue represents the sky while solid blue broken up by white dotted lines marks the ground.

Fantasy Zone

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

Despite its cute characters and pastel coloring, *Fantasy Zone* borrows heavily from the arcade classic *Defender*, in that players fly left and right around a wraparound world, shooting airborne enemies. The ship in *Fantasy Zone* is an egg-shaped craft called an Opa-Opa, and the enemies include flabby flying Quili Quili, scissor-like Sourtham, twisting Thaya-Thaya, bat-like Chamba, and other quirky creatures. To enhance the ship with speed, laser beams, 7-way shots, twin bombs, and other power-ups, players can collect coins for spending in

shops. To advance to each of eight different planets, players must destroy all the bases within the level, and then battle a boss. Unlike the arcade classic (Sega, 1985), the backgrounds disappear during boss battles. Also, the SMS game lacks the little radar showing how many bases are left to destroy, the colors aren't quite as bright, and certain animations are missing. These are minor setbacks, however, in an otherwise excellent, surprisingly challenging game. Don't let the pastel colors fool you — this is a hardcore shooter with tons of enemies. Also released for the NES and TurboGrafx-16.

Fantasy Zone: The Maze

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Maze/Maze Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

The third game in the *Fantasy Zone* series (which began in the arcades in 1985), *Fantasy Zone: The Maze* is a Master System exclusive that eschews the side-scrolling shooter format of the first two games in favor of mediocre, *Pac-Man*-influenced maze action. Players guide the small, oval, winged Opa-Opa around a series of seven selectable, pastel-colored planets (each planet consisting of three mazes and a bonus screen), picking up coins dotted along the pathways in order to complete each screen. Gathering dots also gives players money to purchase the following power-ups: twin shot, wide beam, laser beam, fire bomb, heavy bomb, big wing (extra speed), and top power (temporary invincibility). Enemies to shoot or avoid include cute, quirky little alien ships and soldiers with names like Doringa, Parunga, and Roringa. A second player can join in as Opa-Opa's brother, Upa-Upa, but they can't shoot each other (unlike the far superior *Wizard of Wor*). Followed by: *Fantasy Zone Gear* (Game Gear).

Fantasy Zone II

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1987.

After 10 years of being away, Opa-Opa returns to his homeland. *Fantasy Zone II* looks and plays a lot like the original *Fantasy Zone*, but there are some differences, including an altered color palette, a new assortment of enemies

(including Elephant Man, Beehive, Knuckle-jaw, Flytrap, Rocketron, and Trash Can Man), and warp gates that Opa-Opa must pass through in order to progress through the game. In addition, shops offer such new items as extra ships, shields, 3-way shots, auto beams (rapid fire), and power meter replenishments (Opa-Opa now has a meter instead of a one-hit kill system). Worlds to fly and shoot through include: Pleasure Dome, Sensor Straits, Lost Fields, Checkered Paths, Lands of Fortune, Electric Alleys, Deadly Planes, and House of Blackhearts (in which players must battle all previous bosses once again). Based on Sega's 1987 arcade game.

Galaxy Force

Publisher: Activision. Developer: AM2. Space Combat Simulator, 1 player. 1989.

Galaxy Force for the Master System can't hope to compete with Sega's 3D arcade game released the year before, which was available in a six-player model housed in a rotating, tilting, hydraulic-powered simulator encasement. However, it is a nice take on the *After Burner* formula. Viewed from behind the spaceship (third-person perspective), the game has players flying through four selectable, planet-based levels, each divided into two sections: outer space and inside the planet. Outer space is free-flowing while interior levels feature tunnels to maneuver through and walls to avoid hitting. Weapons include bullets and missiles, the latter using a lock-on/crosshair system similar to that found in *After Burner*. There's only one life per game, but the ship is equipped with shields, giving the action a reasonable level of difficulty. The sequel, *Galaxy Force II* (arcade, 1988), was ported to the Genesis.

Gangster Town

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Light Gun Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Set during the 1920s, *Gangster Town* has one or two FBI agents pointing their Sega Light Phaser at the screen, shooting man-shaped targets (in a practice round), blowing away gangsters, and avoiding innocent blondes. Shooting angels, bottles, bombs (dropped from a

plane), hats, and other items gives players bonus points. The gangsters pop up from windows, manholes, and other such constructs in a variety of colorful, nicely illustrated areas, including Downtown, Saloon, Nightclub, and The Docks. There's even a behind-the-vehicle Car Chase, in which gangsters appear on both sides of a moving car. One of the better light gun shooters of the era, *Gangster Town* is similar in theme to *Hogan's Alley* (NES), but is more expansive and offers more rapid-fire shooting action.

Ghost House

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

With its cartoonish graphics and silly music, the only thing scary about *Ghost House* is how bad it is. Players guide an inept “hero” named Mick through a haunted house, climbing ladders, jumping over traps, and punching mummies, ghosts, bats, and other goofy-looking creatures of the night. The only weapons Mick has are his fists and the occasional flyby sword, which he must jump on in order to use. Objectives include collecting treasure, finding

keys to unlock coffins, locating secret passageways, and defeating a number of vampires (all going by the name of Dracula).

Ghostbusters

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Activision. Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1987.

In this convoluted cartridge, players are given \$10,000 to start their own Ghostbusters franchise. The money is used for purchasing various ghost-busting items, including a pk energy detector, a marshmallow sensor, ghost bate, a ghost vacuum, a super ion beam, and more. Gameplay is divided into four different scenarios: guiding the Ghostbusters icon around a map screen; overhead driving sequences, in which players cruise up the screen, sucking up ghosts and dodging other vehicles; standing before buildings, trapping ghosts between ion beams; and climbing stairs on the way to confront Gorza (known as Gozer in the movie). The Master of the Key, the Gatekeeper, and the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man are also part of the action. Based on the 1984 film (and on the computer game), the Master System version of *Ghostbusters* features some things the

NES rendition lacks, including buildings lining the streets, four selectable cars (economy, common, hearse, and sports), and passwords for saving progress. Also released for the Atari 2600. Much different than the Genesis version, which is a platform shooter. Followed by: *Ghostbusters II* (NES, Game Boy).

Ghouls 'n Ghosts

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1990.

A nice port of Capcom's 1988 arcade game, *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* for the Master System lacks some of the graphical detail of the coin-op classic (and of the Genesis version), but it still looks great, and it adds an interesting facet to the game. As expected, Sir Arthur the



Gangster Town, *Marksman Shooting/Trap Shooting*, and *Shooting Gallery* are all compatible with Sega's Light Phaser gun.

knight runs along dodging obstacles (including guillotines), jumping over gaps, climbing ladders, and throwing knives at such ghoulish enemies as grim reapers, skeletons, and vultures. However, unlike the original (and unlike the Genesis game), weapons don't appear along the ground for players to pick up. Rather, Arthur must enter doors (via treasure chests) in order to upgrade his armor, boots (for increased speed and jumping ability), and helmet, the latter of which grants access to magic spells, upgraded weapons, and special attacks. Areas to battle through include: Place of Execution, Village of Decay, Town of Fire, Crystal Forest, and Demon's Castle. Followed by: *Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts* (SNES, Game Boy Advance) and *Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins* (PSP). See also: *Ghosts 'n Goblins* (NES).

Global Defense

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Non-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Notable for its now-disturbing introductory screen, in which a missile lands behind the twin towers of the World Trade Center, destroying Manhattan in the process, *Global Defense* is divided into offensive and defensive halves. While on the offensive, players guide a cursor around a side-scrolling screen, firing a cannon beam at enemy missiles, killer satellites, crab ships, and attack probes, while at the same time maneuvering the Global Defense Satellite out of harm's way. While on the defensive, players guide a cursor around a stationary screen, firing at enemies to protect the territory below, while at the same time protecting the aforementioned satellite. Holding down button 1 switches control from the cursor to the satellite. As in the coin-op classic *Missile Command*, the explosion clouds created by the player's weapon destroy enemies. *Global Defense* does indeed

borrow from *Missile Command*, but contains enough original elements to keep it from being overly derivative. Levels include: Earth, Moon, Asteroid Belt, Saturn, and Hidden Planet. Based on Sega's 1988 arcade game.

Golden Axe

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1989.

When compared to the original arcade game (Sega, 1989), *Golden Axe* for the Master System is certainly competent (all the levels and magic powers are intact), but it comes up lacking in a couple of key areas. Unlike the coin-op classic, which lets players select from a warrior, an Amazon, or a dwarf, this version only includes the warrior as a playable character. Worse, the two-player simultaneous mode is absent. Graphically, the game is surprisingly close to the Genesis version, but the Genesis game retains the aforementioned traits from the arcade classic, plus adds a special Duel mode. Brandishing a sword and magic powers, the latter of which are acquired via magic pots, the warrior must battle the minions of Death



Unlike most Master System titles, which were produced in a standard cartridge format, *Ghost House* and *Super Tennis* were released as Sega Cards, which were about the size of a credit card. Sega Cards were cheaper to manufacture, but held less game data.

Adder, who has stolen the titular sword. Most famously (*Golden Axe* was a hugely popular game back in the day), the warrior can ride creatures that breathe fire and use their tail as a whip.

Golden Axe Warrior

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1991.

A noteworthy addition to the *Golden Axe* series, *Golden Axe Warrior* looks and plays a lot like *The Legend of Zelda* (NES), but adds towns (where players purchase such items as swords, shields, armor, and magic) to the already fun formula. The evil giant Death Adder has stolen nine crystals from the city of Firewood and hidden them in nine labyrinths, and it is up to a brave, quick-moving adventurer to find them. This involves: exploring deep, dark forests; sailing across vast, stormy seas; moving rocks to find secret caves; solving puzzles (such as turning lava to ice); finding treasures and keys; chopping down trees with a battle axe; killing monsters to earn horns (which act as money); and much more. As in *Zelda*, there's a large overworld, with dungeons down below. Followed by: *Golden Axe II* (Genesis), *Golden Axe: Return of Death Adder* (arcade), *Golden Axe: The Duel* (arcade, Saturn), and *Golden Axe: Beast Rider* (PS3, Xbox 360).

Golvellius — Valley of Doom

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Compile. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

Boasting lush visuals and a robust musical score, *Golvellius — Valley of Doom* is one of the more impressive (if somewhat underappreciated) titles in the Master System library. Armed with a sword and shield for fending off mutated bees, spiders, frogs, bats, snakes, skeletons, and other creatures, players must explore the deserts, mountains, oceans, forests, and graveyards of the titular valley, searching for the lovely Princess Rena. While on the world map, players should swing the sword at rocks and enemies to uncover entrances to underground caves, which come in two forms: side-scrolling platform and overhead view action.

Killing enemies also earns players gold for purchasing such helpful items as Bibles, potions, crystals, and weapons upgrades. Boss battles, puzzles, and conversant characters add to the fun. Fans of *The Legend of Zelda* should definitely check it out. Includes password feature.

Great Baseball

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

In *Great Baseball*, the pitching and batting viewpoint is from behind the pitcher (ala *Bases Loaded* for the NES), but when the ball gets hit into play, gamers are given a larger, overhead view of the field, and the runner automatically heads toward first base. Batting, pitching, running, and fielding are simple and intuitive, and players can select from four different types of pitches: fast ball, left curve, right curve, and change-up. In addition, there are fake throws, balks (a rarity for a video game), relief pitchers, pinch hitters, 26 generic teams to select from, and a home run contest, the latter of which gives players 20 perfect pitches to see how many home runs they can hit. Unfortunately, fielders, runners, and the ball (after it has been hit into play) move painfully slow, bringing everything to a virtual grinding halt. Scratchy voice effects add to the “fun.”

Great Basketball

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

The only U.S.-released hoops title for the Master System, *Great Basketball* features the standard elevated side-view perspective of the five-on-five action, but it breaks down in terms of gameplay. Shots that appear off mark will frequently go in. Pushing and charging fouls are often called when two players simply get close to one another. The short, squatty players appear to be wearing diapers, and the basketball they use moves as though it were a half-deflated beach ball. The court is green, the ball goes out of bounds far too often, and the boundary lines on the end of the court are in front of the baskets. On a less scathing note, there's a cheerleader halftime show, and players



The Sega Sports Pad trackball controller, which is compatible with *Great Ice Hockey* and *Sports Pad Football*.

can select from eight international teams: U.S.A., Canada, U.S.S.R., Japan, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and Hungary. In addition, a “vitality point” system lets gamers adjust the abilities of their players, such as shooting, passing, and jumping (though it’s tough to tell if these changes actually affect gameplay).

Great Football

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Great Football is decent looking (despite flickering players) and even playable (as long as there’s a buddy to join in), but it’s hardly a great game. There’s no tournament mode, no player stats or ratings, no sideline details, and all 12 team names are generic (Foxes, Beavers, Dukes, and the like). Worse, the one-player mode is offense-only against a computer team that gets spotted a random number of points. There are eight offensive plays from which to choose (but no defensive), each of which must be cycled through every single play. When the desired play is highlighted by the computer, players should push button 2, but do so without the other gamer noticing (meaning bluffs are in order). Musically, the game is not bad, but the crowd noises are scratchy and redundant. Passing, running, scrambling, punting, extra points, tackling, field goals, punts, block-

ing (field goals and punts), safeties—many of the barebones rules of football are here, but it’s all decidedly ordinary (at best).

Great Golf

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Golf, 1–4 players (alternating). 1987.

A solid (if slowly paced) entry in the “great” series, *Great Golf* features two game modes: Head-to-Head Match Play and Stroke Play, the latter supporting up to four players. There’s no caddy, but gamers can select 14 clubs for use on the 18-hole course, which features such hazards as roughs, trees, bunkers, water, and out-of-bounds. Wind plays a factor as well. After selecting a club, players adjust the stance of their feet (which determines slicing, hooking, and low and high trajectory), set the angle of the shot, and set the power of the shot (using a power meter). *Great Golf* doesn’t quite live up to its hyperbolic title, but it’s certainly playable.

Great Ice Hockey

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Hockey, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Great Ice Hockey looks decent (the overhead view rink evokes *Ice Hockey* for the NES) and sounds fine (the music is surprisingly peppy), but it plays terribly, thanks in large part

to the game's requiring the use of Sega's dreaded Sports Pad trackball device. Rolling the ball furiously to get onscreen players to move sluggishly makes goals hard to score and the game in general virtually unplayable. There's no tournament mode (games are single matches only) and no penalties, but there are two difficulty levels: junior and senior, both of which are hard, thanks to the awful controls. The action is five-on-five, and gamers can play against several international squads, but are always cast in the role of the U.S. team.

Great Soccer

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Soccer, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

The only U.S.-released soccer title for the Master System, *Great Soccer* lets gamers play as or against eight international teams: U.S.A., Japan, Italy, Great Britain, Brazil, France, West

Germany, and Argentina. The scrolling, six-on-six action is viewed from overhead, but penalty kicks feature a behind-the-player, third-person perspective. Penalty kicks are featured during standard play and in a penalty kick contest. Certain rules of real soccer apply, such as kickoffs, corner kicks, throw-ins, and slide tackles, but there are no headers or bicycle kicks. As soon as the ball gets near the goal, the player will automatically assume control of the goalie. *Great Soccer* is playable (though hardly great), but the high-pitched music is ear-splittingly bad.

Great Volleyball

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Volleyball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Featuring side-view, six-on-six action, *Great Volleyball* lets gamers play as and against eight different international teams: USA,

USSR, China, Korea, Japan, Brazil, Cuba, and France (flags and national anthems are included). Each team plays the same, and all the players look alike (hair and uniform color notwithstanding), but gamers can distribute points to strengthen the speed of their team in three categories: serving, spiking, and receiving. Other moves include jumping, setting, dinking, blocking, delayed attacks, and dummy attacks. Modes of play include Goodwill Match, Tournament, and Practice, the latter of which lets players perfect their serving and spiking (but not receiving) skills. The controls are fairly complex (patience is required to learn all of the moves), but Master System owners who give *Great Volleyball* a fair chance will discover that it is far superior to the other games in the much-maligned "great" series.



Four games in the Master System's much-maligned "great" series: *Great Volleyball*, *Great Football*, *Great Baseball*, and *Great Golf*.

Hang-On/Astro Warrior

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Motorcycle Racing/Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1986.

Hang-On/Astro Warrior was packaged with one of the versions of the Master System console that did not include a Light Phaser. Viewed from behind the motorcycle rider, *Hang-On* has players cruising through five twisting, turning stages (including Seaside, Monument Valley, and City Night), racing past other bikers, dodging obstacles, and trying to reach the end of each course within a set time limit. Each course is supposedly four kilometers long, and the motorcycle players ride has three gears: low, second, and high. *Astro Warrior* is a vertical scrolling shooter that was also released as a single game sold separately.

Hang-On/Safari Hunt

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Motorcycle Racing/Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1986.

Hang-On/Safari Hunt was packaged with the version of the Master System console that included a Light Phaser. *Hang-On*, which is essentially *Pole Position* on a motorcycle, is based on Sega's 1985 coin-op classic, but lacks the novelty of the arcade game's motorcycle-style controls. Predictably, the arcade version also has sharper graphics. *Safari Hunt* is similar to *Duck Hunt* for the NES, but has more detailed graphics and a wider variety of targets, including fish, rabbits, spiders, bats, monkeys, panthers, birds, armadillos, bears, and, of course, ducks. The shooting action takes place in three different environments: Lake, Jungle, and Forest.

James "Buster" Douglas Knockout Boxing

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sanritsu Denki. Sports/Boxing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A much different game than its Genesis counterpart (the side-view in the SMS game is from further back and doesn't scroll, for example), *James "Buster" Douglas Knockout Boxing* for the Master System was produced to cash in on Buster's surprising victory over Mike Tyson for the Heavyweight

Championship (and to stick it to Nintendo, publishers of *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*). As Douglas, players battle a series of boxers in hopes of winning the championship title belt. Boxers move left and right and can block and throw right and left jabs and crosses. During each match, boxers can also throw three super punches (which must be charged up). Unlike the much easier to find Genesis cartridge, which was adapted from Taito's *Final Blow* arcade game, the relatively scarce Master System rendition is similar to the European SMS version of *George Foreman's KO Boxing*.

Joe Montana Football

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

Sporting an overhead view of a side-scrolling field (with players shown at a side angle), *Joe Montana Football* is a fairly typical, largely playable video rendition of the popular sport (though it's light years behind the enjoyment found in *Tecmo Bowl* for the NES). Joe himself gives tips on play-calling, and there are 17 offensive and six defensive plays from which to choose. There are three difficulty levels (beginner, normal, and professional) and 28 selectable teams (each named after an American



Hang On/Safari Hunt was the pack-in cartridge with the version of the Master System console that came with the Light Phaser gun.

city). When the quarterback passes to a receiver or hands the ball off to a running back, the gamer begins controlling that player. Other features include kickoffs, fumbles, interceptions, punts, field goals, and team stats. Also released for the Genesis. Followed by: *Joe Montana II Sports Talk Football* (Genesis) and other sequels.

Kenseiden

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1988.

Kenseiden puts players in control of Hayato, a samurai warrior who must traverse 16 nicely rendered provinces of ancient Japan, climbing up and down staircases, hopping on platforms, and using a sword to battle such creatures as skeletons, fire demons, lizards, and snakes. After defeating each of five tough-as-nails bosses (warlocks who have stolen the Sword of the Dragon King and the Five Secret Scrolls), players are given a new ability or attack method: high jump; crushing head attack (attack from overhead); splitting the helmet (cut downward while jumping); cutting the air (attack both front and rear); or wild wheel sword (swing sword in windmill fashion). Special training rounds let players dodge arrows and spears to increase their life meter or earn a talisman of protection. *Kenseiden* is similar to *Castlevania* (NES), but not as good (there are no special weapons, for example).

King's Quest: Quest for the Crown

Publisher: Parker Brothers. Developer: Parker Brothers. Third-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

Based on Sierra On-Line's computer game, which was first released in 1984 for the IBM PCjr, *King's Quest* puts players in the role of Sir Graham, an intrepid knight on a quest to locate the king's magic mirror, protective shield, and chest of gold. Since the Master System lacks a keyboard, such commands as duck, jump, look about, pick up, open door, swim, and climb are entered via text menus. While traveling around the castles, log cabins, lakes, forests, and other areas, unearthing clues and solving puzzles (many of which require a working know-

ledge of fairy tales), it is easy to die a cheap death as movements must oftentimes be precise. To help in solving puzzles and warding off enemies, players can find a dagger, a pouch, a carrot, a golden egg, a fiddle, a mushroom, and numerous other objects. See also: *King's Quest V* (NES).

Kung Fu Kid

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Kung Fu Kid is the type of cheap, slapped together game that is playable, but ineptly designed. The music and colorful backgrounds evoke the theme effectively enough, but the gameplay needs an overhaul. The titular martial artist (referred to on the box as "the invincible Wang") can kick, jump (extremely high), and throw talismans, but he cannot punch the monsters, lobsters, frogs, and other ill-fitting enemies he will encounter. One strategy is to simply run and jump past the standard enemies, straight to the bosses. If a boss wins, the player is sent all the way back to the beginning of the level, causing certain frustration.

Lord of the Sword

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

In *Lord of the Sword*, a man named Landau, looking to prove his worthiness to become king, embarks upon a quest to pass three tests given by the elders: find the Tree of Merrill; defeat the Goblin of Balala Valley; and destroy the Statue of Evil. The action takes place on seven types of terrain (cave, forest, island, mountain, river, swamp, and underground), with players using a sword and a bow to battle trees, scorpions, flying eyeballs, winged beasts, armed skeletons, and other creatures. Backtracking is sometimes required, as is finding correct routes. Players can frequently hurry past enemies instead of killing them, and talking to people opens up new pathways and provides hints. *Lord of the Sword* is more than a mindless action game (thanks to its nonlinear nature), but is less than enjoyable.

Marksman Shooting/Trap Shooting

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1986.

Marksman Shooting puts players in training with the FBI, taking aim and firing at man-shaped targets that pop up and move across a room decorated with piping, blue walls, and bricks. The illusion of depth is effective, but there are no *Hogan's Alley*-like innocents to avoid, making for a limited concept. In addition, rapid fire combined with unlimited bullets makes the targets too easy to hit. *Trap Shooting* is similar to the clay pigeon portions of *Duck Hunt* (NES), with players firing at discs that fly through the air in pairs. Fortunately, ammo is limited, forcing players to fire judiciously. Shooting discs immediately after release nets 5,000 points, but that strategy is extremely risky. Backgrounds include grassland, seaside, desert, and lakeside. Both games in this Combo Cartridge are playable, but repetitive.

Maze Hunter 3-D

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Maze, 1 player. 1988.

Viewed from an overhead perspective, *Maze Hunter 3-D* makes excellent use of the SegaScope 3-D glasses. The raised walls of the mazes are convincing, as is the impression that the protagonist is jumping up toward the screen. Players must venture through five areas (Metal, Rugged, Jungle, Ice, and Blaze), searching for the key and the exit in 20 different mazes while hitting (with an iron bar) or jumping over rollers, gooms, spinners, polyps, and other odd enemies. Helpful items include power shoes (for jumping on creatures), two-way shots, maze mines, warp tunnels, and more.

Michael Jackson's Moonwalker

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat/Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1990.

Like its better looking (to a surprisingly small degree) Genesis counterpart, *Michael Jackson's Moonwalker* for the Master System finds the "King of Pop" searching door to door for children who were kidnapped by Mr. Big. The magical spark attacks from the Genesis version have been replaced by standard punching

and kicking, but Jackson can still jump, pull off flashy dance moves (though the backgrounds disappear), and turn into a robot. Jackson will also climb stairs, ride elevators, and fend off Dobermans, zombies, spiders, bad guys, and other enemies with his hat. Levels include: Club 30, Parking Lot, Woods, Cavern, and The Enemy Hideout. This cartridge is loosely based on Sega's 1990 arcade game of the same name and on a movie called *Michael Jackson: Moonwalker* (1988). Considering Jackson's later legal difficulties, it's ironic that the game has the eccentric songster *rescuing* children.

Miracle Warriors: Seal of the Dark Lord

Publisher: Sega. Developer: ASCII/Kogado Software Products. First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1988.

In *Miracle Warriors*, instead of a full view of the area and the player's character, the top right fifth or so of the screen is the playfield, with gamers maneuvering a white map square around towns, across bridges, in caverns, through forests, and amongst mountains. Upon encountering a character, a list of options appears: attack (battles are turn-based), retreat, talk, and magical spell. The top half of the screen then shows a static close-up of the merchant, thief, beast, or other creature players confront, along with a background. The player's character is not visible, giving the game a primitive look. Helpful items to find include a boat, swords, shields, armor, keys, sacred nuts (for throwing), a staff of earthquakes, and much more. In addition, certain characters can join your party. Includes battery backup. RPG fans should stick with *Final Fantasy* (NES), *Dragon Warrior* (NES), or *Phantasy Star* (SMS).

Missile Defense 3-D

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Missile Defense 3-D uses the Light Phaser and the SegaScope 3-D Glasses to good effect, making for a nice looking, highly original game. Players must shoot down nuclear missiles headed for six different areas: The Arctic, Space, The Eastern and Western Missile Bases, and The Eastern and Western Capitals. Each level is divided

into three stages: missiles launched from a missile base; missiles headed for their target; and missiles approaching the city. If any missile remains onscreen through all three stages, it's game over.

Monopoly

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Board Game, 1–10 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Like its NES counterpart, *Monopoly* for the Master System lets gamers play the popular board game on their television set, the advantage being that the computer handles all the accounting and money management tasks. Also, up to 10 gamers can play (compared to eight in the NES version). Gameplay involves taking turns rolling dice, moving a cutely animated token around a board, earning money, drawing Community Chest and Chance Cards, and trying to bankrupt the other players by purchasing, renting, and selling houses, hotels, an electric company, and other properties. Unlike the NES game, the SMS rendition includes battery backup. However, the NES cartridge has a game editor mode and superior sound effects (including digitized voices). Also released for the Genesis, SNES, and numerous other systems.



Missile Defense 3-D, *Zaxxon 3-D*, and *Maze Hunter 3-D* are all compatible with the awesome SegaScope 3-D Glasses.

Montezuma's Revenge Featuring Panama Joe

Publisher: Parker Brothers. Developer: Parker Brothers. Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

In this rousing adventure game, players guide the Indiana Jones-like Panama Joe through the 100-room mazes of Emperor Montezuma's perilous pyramids, grabbing the following items along the way: jewels; amulets (which disable enemies); keys (which open color-coded doors); swords (which enable Joe to eliminate spiders and skulls on contact); and torches (which illuminate dark chambers). During his mission, which ends at the Treasure Chamber of Emperor Montezuma, Joe must avoid laser gates, ride conveyor belts, cross disappearing floors, climb up and down ropes, slide down poles, dodge mummies and bats, and jump over skulls, snakes, spiders, and rolling boulders. Backtracking is sometimes necessary, falling from too great a distance is deadly, and Joe can only keep five items in inventory at any given time. The action, which should appeal to *Pitfall!* fans, is viewed from the side and takes place through a series of interconnected, non-scrolling screens. Also released for the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, and ColecoVision. Followed by: *Montezuma's Return!* (Game Boy Color).

My Hero

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

The arcade version of *My Hero* (Sega, 1985) has sharper, more detailed graphics than its Master System counterpart, but the games play about the same. A kung fu master named Steve must rescue his kidnapped girlfriend by punching and kicking his way through a constant barrage of knife-throwers, hoodlums, bulldogs, frogs, a guy wearing a Mohawk, and other enemies. Steve can trip the bad guys, but a flying kick is his most effective attack. Obstacles to jump over or other-

wise avoid include bombs, spiked wheels, falling rocks, radio-controlled cars, and flames. Backgrounds include trees, buildings, and the like. One-hit deaths and no continues make *My Hero* a formidable challenge (the arcade original did have continues).

The Ninja

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1986.

With a title like *The Ninja*, players may expect this game to be a generic side-scroller. However, the game surprises with its vertical scrolling (for the most part), hugely enjoyable gameplay, in which players guide the titular ninja up the screen, throwing darts at fire-blowing ninjas, runaway horses, ninja wolves, samurai, darting ninjas who throw sickles, and ninjas that disguise themselves as rocks and pop up out of the ground. The only lame enemy is a repeating boss character. Button 1 throws darts in the direction players aim while button 2 throws darts directly forward. Retreating while firing forward is a smart tactic when the screen gets busy, as is disappearing, which is done by pressing both buttons simultaneously. Grabbing secret scrolls lets players throw pinwheel darts, run faster, and find their way to the captive princess. There are 13 colorful locations, including Grassy Field, River Bank (in which players jump on logs), Town Street, Residential Samurai Area, and Inside Ohkami Castle. *The Ninja* is somewhat similar to *Commando*, but with a Japanese setting and no grenades.

Out Run

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports Car Racing, 1 player. 1987.

Sega's original *Out Run* (arcade, 1986) took the formula established by such racing games as *Pole Position* (1982) and *Hang-On* (1985) and amped up the action with multiple routes, three selectable songs, a passenger riding shotgun, and crazy wrecks in which the driver and his mate would tumble out of the car and onto the ground (the car players drive is a convertible). The Master System version leaves much of the gameplay intact, which is an

accomplishment in itself, but the characters don't fall out of the car during wrecks (a feature that is sorely missed). In addition, there's graphical breakup (thanks to a lower frame rate), and the voice effects are gone, which is something the more colorful Genesis version keeps intact (the Genesis game also has a separate button for shifting gears, which the two-button Master System controller prohibits). Overall, this is an impressive port (considering the relative limitations of the hardware) of a fast, fun, good looking game.

Paperboy

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Tiertex. Mission-Based Racing, 1 player. 1990.

Although it lacks voice effects (and, obviously, a handlebar controller), *Paperboy* for the Master System is an excellent port of Atari's 1984 coin-op classic (and certainly an improvement over the bland NES version). Players ride their bike up a sidewalk (and partially into yards and along the side of the road), throwing papers at various suburban targets positioned on the left side of the screen, primarily the paperboxes and porches of subscribers' houses and the windows of non-subscribers' houses. Papers are limited in supply, so it is necessary to pick up extra bundles along the way. There are numerous obstacles to dodge, including workmen, lawnmowers, grates, fences, and manholes. Making it to the end of a street results in a special bonus training course, and levels are referred to as days of the week. Also released for the Genesis, Game Gear, Game Boy, Game Boy Color, Atari Lynx, and Nintendo 64 (the latter radically changing the formula). Followed by: *Paperboy 2* (NES, Genesis, SNES, Game Boy, Game Gear).

Parlour Games

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Billiards/Darts/Board Game, 1-4 players (simultaneous). 1988.

In *Parlour Games*, players select from three competently programmed competitions: Billiards, Darts, and World Bingo. Viewed from overhead, Billiards includes four game modes (Basic, Nine Ball, Five Ball, and Rotation), but

there are only 11 balls (plus the cue ball) instead of the standard 16. Gameplay is simple: aim, establish strike point on cue ball, and use power meter to determine how hard to strike ball. Darts provides a large front view of the board, a small side view of the guy throwing the darts, and two modes of play: 301 and 501. World Bingo is similar to standard bingo, but numbers are drawn via a slot machine. Betting more money gives players more cards and more ways to win.

Penguin Land

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Adventure Puzzle, 1 player. 1987.

In this game, players must help a Penguin named Overbite roll eggs (one at a time) through downward-scrolling mazes of ice blocks, boulders, pits, polar bear-like beasts, rocks (which can be moved), and other obstacles, trying to get each egg safely to a spaceship. Overbite pushes the eggs along platforms and drops them down gaps, over cliffs, and through egg tubes, but he should be careful not to drop an egg down too far or it will break. Rocks, crea-

tures, and various other hazards can harm the eggs as well. Breaking certain ice blocks reveals clocks, iron shields, springs (for jumping higher), and ghosts, the latter of which make Overbite move in the opposite direction of where he's being commanded to go. *Penguin Land* is cute, but extremely difficult, requiring patience, meticulous movements, and strategic planning to make any level progression whatsoever. An Editor mode lets gamers create and save their own mazes via battery backup.

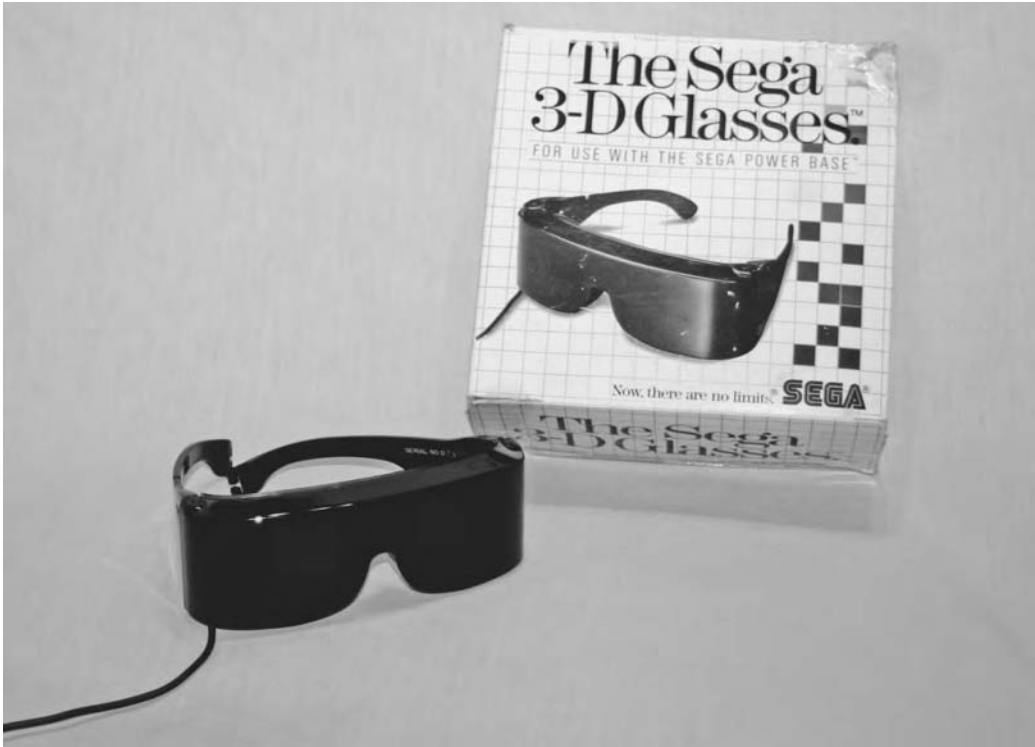
Phantasy Star

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Third-Person Role-Playing Game/First-Person Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1988.

Set in the Algol Solar System in Space Century 3240, *Phantasy Star* finds a brave young girl named Alis on a mission to avenge the death of her brother, who was killed during a rebellion against the evil King Lassic. Alis' journey, which transforms into an all-out quest for the liberation of the people of Algol, takes her to three planets: the forest-ridden Palma, the desert-like Motavia, and the icy Dezoris. Joined by a talking cat, a rebel warrior, and a magician (once they are found), Alis walks around a colorfully detailed overworld, talking to townsfolk, avoiding traps, purchasing items (swords, guns, armor, keys, magic spells, and the like), engaging in turn-based battles against animated monsters, and exploring first-person, pseudo-3D dungeons (which looked very impressive in 1988). Originally retailing for the then-unheard-of \$69.99, *Phantasy Star* was a highly influential RPG, spawning numerous sequels, including: *Phantasy Star II*, *Phantasy Star III*, and *Phantasy Star IV* (Genesis); *Phantasy Star Online* (Dreamcast); and *Phantasy Star Universe* (PS2, Xbox 360).



Three of the more noteworthy titles in the Master System library: *Penguin Land* (a difficult adventure puzzle); *Fantasy Zone: The Maze* (a Master System-only title in the *Fantasy Zone* series); and *Global Defense* (based on Sega's *Missile Command*-like arcade game).



The best peripheral for the Master System, the Sega 3-D Glasses (which are getting harder and harder to find in today's collector's market) make images seem to pop out of the screen for such titles as *Blade Eagle 3-D* and *Poseidon Wars 3-D*.

Poseidon Wars 3-D

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. First-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Poseidon Wars 3-D puts players at the helm of the U.S.S. Poseidon attack cruiser, which is equipped with radar, sonar, 76mm cannons, and surface-to-surface missiles. Viewed from a first-person perspective, gameplay consists of cruising across the open seas (through 13 levels), aiming crosshairs and firing at approaching jets, choppers, cruisers, submarines, torpedoes, and cannons. Destroying certain enemies refuels the ship. Unlike most games designed for the SegaScope 3-D Glasses, *Poseidon Wars* offers a 2D mode (simply press button 1 on the second control pad). Fans of *SubRoc-3D* (arcade, 1982) may enjoy this game.

Power Strike

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Compile. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

In *Power Strike*, the planet has been taken over by mutant vegetation, infecting buildings, laboratories, fighter craft, and more (including people). To thwart this horticultural holocaust, players guide a fighter craft up the screen through six levels (denoted by such surface visuals as machinery, water, plant life, and cracked dirt), shooting airborne enemies and ground-based targets. By collecting "P" icons, the ship's Vulcan cannon can be upgraded to rapid fire and double and triple shots. The secondary weapon is upgradeable by grabbing numbers 1-8, which gives the ship such firepower as plasma balls, laser beams, homing shots, blade shots, or waving plasma bolts. Collecting the same number in succession powers up that particular weapon. Shields and barriers are available as well. Originally released only through mail order (but made available to the general public shortly thereafter), *Power Strike* is one of the harder to find Master System games. Followed by: *Robo Aleste* (Sega CD).

Pro Wrestling

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Wrestling, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Not to be confused with the superior game of the same name for the NES, *Pro Wrestling* for the Master System lets players select from four two-man wrestling teams, each of the tag-team variety: Mad Soldiers (Muscle and Iron); Orient Express (Dragonfly and Giant Bull); Great Maskmen (Green Mask and Stone Head); and Crush Brothers (Elder Crusher and Younger Crusher). Each wrestler can execute simple punches and kicks (which for some reason are accompanied by text pop-ups), and they can also pull off body slams, drop kicks, chair attacks, running body attacks, and other maneuvers (including the German suplex hold). The large-fisted, big-headed wrestlers are super-deformed in appearance, as is the referee dancing along the back of the ring (there are four different refs in all). The tedious one-player mode takes gamers through three leagues: Mexican, Pacific, and World. Two-player action is recommended.

Psycho Fox

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

A delightful and versatile platformer that will surely please *Alex Kidd* and *Super Mario Bros.* fans, *Psycho Fox* has players guiding the titular canid through seven worlds (including a graveyard, a cloud level, an ice world, and a desert), dodging obstacles (spikes, cannonballs, steam, and the like) and punching and jumping on cutesy enemies. In addition, gamers can transform into a hippo, a leopard, and a monkey, each with varying strengths and weaknesses (for example, the hippo is slow, but can punch through stone walls). A crow named Birdfly perches atop Psycho's shoulder and can be thrown like a boomerang, and power-ups (invincibility, higher jumps, and the like) can be found in eggs or acquired through defeating enemies. *Psycho Fox*, which is fairly long and requires strategic use of various items, lets players take one of two routes—ground or sky—for each level.

Quartet

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Aliens have attacked Space Colony Number Nine, and it is up to Mary (or Mary and Edgar in two-player mode) to save the day.

To eliminate the strange creatures, which include giant eyeballs, pairs of lips, amoeba-like beasts, and more, Mary can shoot them with her gun. She can also grab the following power-ups: bombs, missiles, and stoppers (for temporarily freezing enemies). The aliens regenerate and follow Mary around, and she must find a hidden star in each of the first five levels to make it to the sixth, making for a challenging game. In addition, each level contains a boss that must be defeated to produce a key to exit that level. Luckily, Mary can crouch, jump fairly high, and sometimes fly (via a supersonic jet engine). The misleading title of this cartoonish romp through a futuristic space



Quartet, *Action Fighter*, and *Thunder Blade*, each based on a Sega arcade game, and each complete with box, instruction manual, and cartridge.

station is derived from the original arcade game (Sega, 1986), which boasted four-player simultaneous action.

R-Type

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

A phenomenal port of Nintendo's 1987 arcade game, which helped popularize the side-scrolling shooter, *R-Type* for the Master System even has a secret extra level not found in the coin-op classic (bringing the total to nine). Players meticulously guide the R-9 fighter spacecraft through the caves, cities, battleships, and buildings of the evil Bydo Empire, dodging obstacles (including walls) while firing away at exotic looking alien creatures, robots, and vessels. Holding the fire button down charges the ship's lasers, and there are six different power-ups to grab: speed; twin homing missiles; reflecting laser force; antiair laser force (ring-style laser shots); antiland laser force (shoots up and down, crawls along surfaces); and bit (two spheres that shoot pulse beams). Droid units can also be attached to the ship. The arcade original is faster, and certain details are missing (such as the laser beam meter), but this port squeezes as much out of the SMS as anyone should expect. Also released for the Game Boy and TurboGrafx-16. Followed by numerous sequels, including *R-Type II* (arcade), *Super R-Type* (SNES), and *R-Type Final* (PS2).

Rambo First Blood Part II

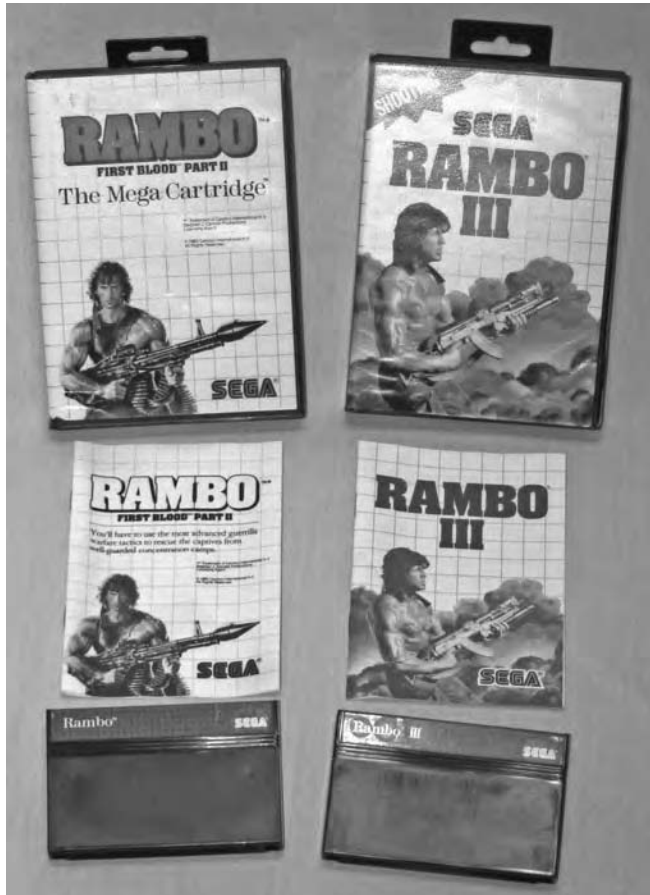
Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

Patterned after such games as *Front Line*, *Ikari Warriors*, and *Commando*, *Rambo First Blood Part II* has players, as Rambo, walking through six overhead-view levels

(Jungle, Forest, Swamp, Desert, Mountain, and Seacoast), blowing up concentration camps, rescuing comrades, and shooting infantrymen, artillery men, knife soldiers, snipers, flame throwers, rocket launchers, and other enemies. Rambo is armed with an M-60 and a limited supply of arrow-bombs. The action moves slowly, but the enemies and their firepower crowd the screen, making for an extremely difficult game. A second player can join in to make things a bit easier (not to mention more enjoyable). Based on the 1985 feature film, which starred Sylvester Stallone in the titular role.

Rambo III

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1988.



Although there was no video game based on the original *First Blood*, *Rambo First Blood Part II* and *Rambo III* did make it to the Master System.

Based on the 1988 feature film, *Rambo III* should please fans of *Operation Wolf*. As the camera pans to the right, players fire the Light Phaser at gunship helicopters, tanks, Spetsnaz troopers, and other enemies, some of which pop up from behind obstacles (jeeps, barrels, and the like) or cruise across the screen. The action is mindless (in a good way), but there are innocents to avoid, grenades to throw (by shooting icons), and potion for replenishing health. Levels include troop barracks, a prison camp, a Soviet base, and four others. The mission is to rescue Colonel Trautman, who has been captured by Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Rich, detailed graphics complement the testosterone-infused action. *Rambo III* for the SMS is much different than both the third-person arcade game and the overhead view Genesis cart.

Rampage

Publisher: Activision. Developer: Sega. Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Thanks to the inclusion of all three monsters from Bally/Midway's *Godzilla*- and *King Kong*-inspired arcade game (1986), *Rampage* for the Master System is superior to its NES counterpart (though both versions lack the coin-op classic's three-player mode). After selecting George the Ape, Lizzie the Lizard, or Ralph the Wolf, gamers guide their monster as it climbs buildings, punches buildings (incrementally destroying them), demolishes bridges, and eats people, helicopters, trolleys, tanks, and other delicacies. Certain edibles are harmful, though, so players should be careful what they ingest. The monsters can jump as well, which they should do when buildings start crumbling down. There are 10 five-stage cities to trash: Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Dallas, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, each of which has a generic, standardized look. *Rampage* was popular in the arcades and on several consoles, but its intriguing concept is better than its sluggish execution.

Rastan

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1988.

Due to hardware limitations, one can't expect *Rastan* for the Master System to mimic its coin-op counterpart (Taito, 1987) note-for-note, but the differences between the two games are worth pointing out. The much more graphically detailed arcade classic has parallax scrolling, the Conan-like barbarian players control roars when he dies, and falling in water results in instant death. In the Master System game, which has flickering and smaller sprites (but nice graphics overall), the green creatures in level one look like Ninja Turtles, and landing in water only takes a small portion of energy. In addition, Rastan must stop briefly when he uses a weapon. In the arcade game, Rastan's stride remains unbroken when he swings his sword, axe, or mace. Overall, the engagingly robust gameplay remains relatively faithful to its source, with Rastan battling mythological creatures, climbing up and down ropes, jumping over gaps and onto platforms (including high jumps), dodging spikes that protrude from castle walls and floors, and much more. Followed by: *Rastan Saga II* (Genesis) and *Warrior Blade: Rastan Saga: Episode III* (arcade).

R.C. Grand Prix

Publisher: Seismic Software. Developer: Absolute Entertainment. Miniature/Radio Control Racing, 1–4 players (alternating, 2-player simultaneous). 1990.

Viewed from a $\frac{3}{4}$ overhead perspective (the screen scrolls to keep your car near the center of the screen), *R.C. Grand Prix* has players racing a remote controlled car against three competitors around 10 twisting, turning, increasingly challenging tracks (turning gets especially difficult in later levels). Doing well grants players prize money for use in purchasing strategy-rich upgrades, including tires, batteries, gears, motors, and high-performance suspension. Up to four players take turns trying to survive (finishing in last place grants you a quick exit), with the computer controlling your car during another player's turn to race (upgrades each player has purchased determines how fast their computer-controlled car will go). Two-player, head-to-head drag racing is available as well. Somewhat similar to: *Micro Machines* (NES).

Reggie Jackson Baseball

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Despite less-than-intelligent computer A.I. and the lack of MLB or MLBPA licensing (meaning the 26 teams included are fictitious), *Reggie Jackson Baseball* plays a good game of America's favorite pastime, especially for two players. Gamers can swing high and low, pick off lead runners, steal bases, bring in pinch hitters and relief pitchers, and influence the ball before, during, and after pitches. Once the ball has been hit, the action switches to an overhead viewpoint that is workable, but takes some getting used to thanks to slow fielders and a tough-to-judge ball shadow. The game, which was a spiritual precursor to *Tommy Lasorda Baseball* (Genesis), has numerous flourishes, including cheerleaders (which is odd for a baseball game), animated umpires, bench-clearing brawls, and close-ups of plays at home plate. Modes of play include: Exhibition, Tournament, Watch, and Home Run Contest.

Rescue Mission

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Unlike most light gun shooters of the era, in which players fire at targets that pop up from behind obstacles, *Rescue Mission* has players guarding a railroad handcart that travels up, down, left, and right along various tracks. The handcart in question, which is manned by a computer-controlled medic, picks up wounded soldiers who stand along the tracks waving white flags. As a constant barrage of jet troopers, special forces troopers, infantrymen, boomerangs, grenades, balloon bombs, and other enemies attack the handcart, players must shoot them while avoiding hitting the medic and the injured soldiers. Land mines positioned along the tracks should also be shot. There are five brief, though enjoyable levels of play:

Jungle, Swamp, Village, Bridge, and Ammo Depot. Visually, the game evokes *Rambo III* (SMS). Sega Light Phaser required.

Rocky

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Boxing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

This graphically detailed button-masher puts players in the role of Rocky "The Italian Stallion" Balboa as he faces foes familiar to fans of the famous film franchise: Apollo Creed, Clubber Lang, and Ivan Drago. Prior to each match, Rocky must train on a sandbag, a punching ball, or against training mitts. Successful training makes Rocky a faster, stronger fighter. Boxers can duck, hold their hands up to guard, and throw three types of punches: straight-on, hook, and uppercut. In the two-player mode, someone must always be Rocky, meaning the "bad guys" can't fight each other. Rocky and Clubber Lang also appeared in *Rocky Super Action Boxing* for the ColecoVision.

Shanghai

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Tile Puzzle, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.



Not all Master System sports titles fell under the "great" series of games, as *Reggie Jackson Baseball* and *Pro Wrestling*, each pictured with box, cartridge, and instruction manual, will attest.

Based on the ancient Chinese game Mah-jongg, *Shanghai* is simple to play, yet deviously difficult to beat. The objective is to remove 144 tiles from a pyramid (viewed from overhead), two tiles at a time. Each tile in the pyramid has a match, meaning there are 72 matches. To remove a pair of tiles, players must select a tile along with its match. However, only tiles that are “free” can be selected. A free tile is one that has nothing on top of it and is open to the left or right. The game ends when players have removed all the tiles, or when players can no longer make any legal moves (removing the wrong two tiles leaves no matching pairs). Designs on the tiles include dots, bamboo, Chinese symbols, seasons, and flowers. A help menu lets players identify specific tiles, back up as many moves as they have made, show all available moves, and peek at tiles that are hidden from view. The lively, but redundant music can be turned off, and the position of each tile is random for each game. Also released for the arcade, Game Boy, and Atari Lynx. Followed by: *Super Shanghai* (arcade), *Shanghai: True Valor* (PlayStation), and other variations on the formula.

Shinobi

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

A must-own cartridge for Master System fans, *Shinobi* is a stellar port of Sega’s 1987 coin-op classic. Players guide a Master Ninja named Joe Musashi through five riveting, crisply controlled, action-packed levels, rescuing children and throwing shurikens at gunmen, ninjas, and other members of the Ring of Five terrorist network. In addition to throwing shurikens, Musashi can jump, super jump (to higher platforms), squat, crab-walk, punch, and kick. He can also use a sword, nunchukas, a chain, a gun, bombs, knives, and various types of magic, the latter enabling him to freeze enemies, fly, become invincible, call down lightning, surround himself with a tornado, and release eight other selves (for defeating all on-screen enemies). First-person, target-shooting bonus screens find Musashi throwing shurikens at advancing green and blue ninjas. Followed by numerous sequels and spin-offs, including *The Revenge of Shinobi* (Genesis), *Shinobi III* (Genesis), and *Alex Kidd in Shinobi World* (SMS).



Although the NES was a more commercially viable console, the Master System did have some titles based on outside properties, including *Rocky*, *Ghostbusters*, and *Michael Jackson’s Moonwalker*.

Shooting Gallery

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Designed for the Sega Light Phaser, *Shooting Gallery* has players taking aim and firing at blimps, air balloons, TV sets, spaceships (which can only be shot when their shields are down), and other items through 24 levels of play. The shooting action is pretty basic, but it does offer certain flourishes, such as exploding ducks, balls that pass through tubes (the balls can only be shot when exposed), and backgrounds that tear when shot. If players fail to shoot the required number of targets in any round, the game will end.

Slap Shot

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sanritsu Denki.
Sports/Hockey, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous).
1990.

Viewed from overhead, *Slap Shot* has fairly standard hockey action, with players shooting, passing, checking, blocking, and, like in *Blades of Steel* for the NES, fighting. The player that loses a fight has to sit in the penalty box for two minutes. There are two game modes (Exhibition and Tournament) and eight different teams (including America, Canada, and West Germany), each of which is ranked according to power, speed, and balance. A scored goal will prompt a close-up, behind-the-shooter animation, and team celebrations are shown after each game. *Slap Shot* is superior to *Great Ice Hockey*, which made the mistake of requiring the use of the Sega Sports Pad. Similar to: *Ice Hockey* (NES).

Sonic the Hedgehog

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega.
Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player.
1991.

Released late in the life of the Master System, *Sonic the Hedgehog* has the same basic gameplay as the original Genesis version, and the basic look is relatively intact as well. Players guide the speeding, spinning, bouncing, jumping, rolling, attitudinal blue hedgehog up hills, across platforms, and over spikes (and other obstacles), battling Dr. Robotnik and his cronies by spinning into them. Despite the aforementioned similarities, there are some notable differences. Level design has changed (there's now a forced-scrolling level, for example); Sonic can't gather up his scattered rings after getting hit; shields carry over into the next level; and Sonic can sometimes die by simply falling a short distance off a platform (such as in the vertical scrolling sections of the Jungle Zone). Perhaps the

biggest difference has to do with bonus rounds, which no longer harbor Chaos Emeralds. Rather, the vaunted baubles are now hidden within the levels. Also released for the Game Gear. Followed by numerous sequels and off-shoots, including *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* (Genesis, Game Gear) and *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* (Genesis).

Space Harrier

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1987.

Like *Zaxxon* for the Atari 2600, *Space Harrier* for the Master System can't hope to reproduce the sophisticated visual appearance of its respective coin-op counterpart. The result is a playable shooter with solid controls, but choppy scaling, poor animation, and blocky objects. Players view the action from behind the titular extra-terrestrial warrior, who flies through the air and runs along the ground through 18 stages, shooting (or avoiding) trees, giant mushrooms,



Tetris didn't make it to the Master System, but the console was home to these two puzzlers: *Shanghai* and *Columns*, each pictured with box, instruction manual, and cartridge.

mammoths, towers, jet planes, robots, skull-faced creatures, and other enemies that start in the distance and grow closer as the Space Harrier moves forward. Stages five and 12 are bonus rounds, in which the Space Harrier rides on the back of an indestructible dragon that runs over everything in his path. Includes “get ready” and “aaaahhhh!” voice effects. The unusual behind-the-shooter viewpoint, splashy 3D graphics, and full-motion cockpit cabinet made the arcade original (Sega, 1985) a huge sensation, meaning multiple home versions were inevitable, including ports for the TurboGrafx-16, Game Gear, and Sega 32X.

Space Harrier 3-D

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Space Harrier 3-D plays a lot like *Space Harrier*, but it includes new stages, new obstacles, and new enemies (including ships that look like *Star Wars* TIE Fighters). More immediately obvious is the game’s compatibility with the SegaScope 3-D Glasses, which give the visuals a sharper, deeper, more discernable appearance (though the animation, scaling, and objects are still rough around the edges). The indestructible dragon from the first game has been kidnapped (so goes the storyline), meaning there are no bonus rounds this time out. The interesting look of this game makes it regrettable that Sega never brought their coin-op classic, *Subroc-3D* (1982), to the Master System. Followed by: *Space Harrier II* (Genesis) and *Planet Harriers* (arcade). Similar to: *3-D WorldRunner* (NES).

SpellCaster

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Platform Shooter/Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

In *SpellCaster*, players guide a noble warrior named Kane on a mission to uncover the mystery behind a series of attacks on various temples and villages. The game is divided into side-scrolling action scenarios and static adventure screens, the latter of which have players using intellect and strategy while listening to conversations, following the plot of the story, and selecting from a list of commands: talk,

take, use, move (enter and leave buildings, towns, and the like), look (examine surroundings), terrain (examine overview), at what (examine specific object), and spell (use one of nine different spells). In the action scenes, Kane jumps on platforms and over gaps (and other obstacles), shooting Ki Force at an assortment of creatures. Throughout the game there are numerous swords, armor, and other helpful items to find, including x-ray glasses, a lute, a harp, a sacred mirror, and a necklace. Includes password feature.

Spider-Man

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Wilson “The Kingpin” Fisk has planted a bomb in New York City, framing Spider-Man in the process. Spidey only has an hour or so of real time to find and diffuse the bomb, so he must move fast as he runs, jumps, punches, kicks, wall-crawls, and web-slings his way through a warehouse, sewers, a power plant, the beach, the streets, and Kingpin’s Lair. Each level contains a classic Spider-Man boss (such as Dr. Octopus, Electro, or Sandman) who must be defeated in order to procure a key. In addition to battling bad guys, Spidey must confront the police as well. Webbing is limited, but Spidey can take photos of his enemies and sell the pics to the Daily Bugle to pay for more fluid. Dubbed “Spider-Man vs. the Kingpin” on the title screen, this late release game was also produced for the Genesis, Game Gear, and Sega CD.

Sports Pad Football

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

Sports Pad Football looks and plays like *Great Football*, but with modified controls due to its compatibility with Sega’s ill-fated Sports Pad trackball controller, which is required to play the game.

Spy vs Spy

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Action, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1988.

Based on the highly original 1984 computer game (which in turn was based on the *Mad*

magazine comic strip), *Spy vs Spy* for the Master System is very similar to its NES counterpart, but there are some subtle differences. Both games include booby-trap time bombs, standard bombs, and springs, but the Master System version also has guns. Interestingly, the NES buckets are filled with water while the Master System buckets are electrical. Both games offer a split-screen perspective, and both pit Heckel (white spy) against Jackel (black spy) as they search rooms and set traps for one another. Also released for the Game Boy Color. Followed by: *Spy vs Spy — Operation: Booby-trap* (Game Boy). A 3D take on the strip was released for the Xbox.

Strider

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1991.

Like its Genesis counterpart, *Strider* for the SMS is a straightforward port of Capcom's 1989 arcade game. Unfortunately, thanks to sluggish controls and the title character's inability to duck, it's nowhere near as good. Smooth scrolling and nice graphics can't cover up the game's aforementioned faults. Gameplay is as follows: In the role of sword-swinging Strider Hiryu, players must run, jump, slide, hack, and slash through five levels of action, battling dinosaurs, robots, and other creatures while trying — oftentimes in vain — to avoid getting killed. Much different than the more complex NES version, which includes such complications as keys, readable data disks, and backtracking. Followed by: *Strider Returns: Journey from Darkness* (Genesis, Game Gear) and *Strider 2* (arcade, PlayStation).

Super Monaco GP

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1990.

A port of Sega's 1989 arcade game (one version of which was a sit-down, force-feed-back unit housed in a racecar cabinet), *Super Monaco GP* for the Master System is a significant downgrade from its progenitor, despite the addition of a two-player mode. Players, viewing the action from behind the car, can enter Grand

Prix mode (one-player only) or Vs. Battle mode, both of which provide a split-screen perspective. Data and a map of the course take up the top third of the screen, making the view of the road and background scenery very small. There are 16 different twisting, turning courses (including Brazil, Mexico, U.S.A., and Japan), and players can adjust their car's transmission, wing (traction), engine, and tires (soft, super soft, middle, and hard). Unlike the vastly superior Genesis version (which does lack two-player action), the SMS rendition does not feature World Championship mode. *Super Monaco GP* is the sequel to *Monaco GP* (arcade, 1980).

Super Tennis

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Tennis, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1986.

With its simple controls and nice looking court, crowd, and players, *Super Tennis* could've been a pretty neat little game. Unfortunately, it is ruined by the following flaws: a ball that moves way too slowly; a two-player mode that doesn't let gamers actually play against one another (doubles against the computer is the only two-player option); and serving that is very hard to judge (it would be extremely easy to beat the computer if serves were more accurate). Collision detection is off as well, meaning sometimes it looks as though the racket should have made contact with the ball when it didn't. Button 1 controls ground strokes, volleys, and smashes while button 2 executes lob shots. Backhands and forehands are determined by the direction the player is facing, but players can't use the D-pad (or any other method) to aim shots. Options include three levels of speed, control, and player type, and five computer skill levels.

Teddy Boy

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Platform Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

In the overly cute, but highly entertaining *Teddy Boy*, players hop a beanie-capped kid around a series of wraparound platform levels, shooting a "microgun" at blue-masked monsters, snail creatures, flea beasts, and other quirky

creatures. When shot, the baddies turn small and innocuous, enabling Teddy Boy to eliminate them with a simple touch. If Teddy Boy waits too long to touch a downed enemy, it will turn into an eyeball bug that will eat up time left on the clock. If Teddy Boy stays on a platform too long, it will disappear. Shooting dice can uncover such bonus point items as cigarettes (!), beer (!), sneakers, and toy bears. Filled with fun and challenge, *Teddy Boy* is a nice port of Sega's *Teddy Boy Blues* arcade game (1985). Fans of *Joust* and *Bubble Bobble* will surely enjoy it.

Thunder Blade

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Vertical Scrolling Shooter/Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

In *Thunder Blade*, players pilot the titular helicopter through four areas (Urban Combat, Mountain/Desert, River Delta, and Refinery), firing a chain cannon (which releases a steady stream of bullets) and air-to-ground missiles at attack helicopters, jet fighters, torpedo cruisers, tiger tanks, large fortresses, and other enemies, most of which move in redundant, unimaginative patterns. There are 12 levels in all, alternating between overhead view action and the less typical behind-the-helicopter viewpoint. At the end of each cleared stage, players earn bonus points based on number of enemies destroyed. Unfortunately, there are no power-ups to speak of, and the air-to-ground missiles can only be fired one at a time, making the game harder than it should be. Unlike the much more dynamic arcade classic (Sega, 1987), which was available in both a sit-down cabinet and a vibrating joystick model, players cannot move the helicopter upward and downward during the overhead view stages. Followed by: *Super Thunder Blade* (Genesis).

Time Soldiers

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Vertical Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Despite the expected setbacks, such as slower gameplay, flickering, and somewhat less detailed graphics, *Time Soldiers* for the Master

System is an admirable port of Romstar's 1987 arcade semi-classic, which borrowed from such overhead run-and-gun games as *Commando* and *Ikari Warriors*. Players, as the titular soldier, must rescue five fellow warriors from six different time periods: Primitive, Ancient Rome, Medieval Japan, World War II, Future World, and Gylend's World (home of an evil space tyrant who turned the aforementioned warriors into energy balls). Players are armed with shoulder-mounted cannons and can pick up such dropped weapons as tri-shot guns, missiles, and energy guns for use in blowing away dinosaurs, cavemen, tanks, ninjas, and various other enemies (including huge bosses). Teleporters allow players to travel between eras, giving the game some degree of non-linearity. *Time Soldiers* is most enjoyable (not to mention easier to beat) when played with a friend.

TransBot

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

Set after the Nuclear War of solar year 2,000, when people had emerged from their underground shelters, *TransBot* has players trying to thwart an uprising by Dalaus, an artificial intelligence computer trying to create a dictatorial empire. To destroy the fighter planes, robots, mechanical debris, and other enemies (which move in increasingly crowded waves), players must pilot the CA-214, which is a combat astro-plane capable of the following weapons upgrades: standard beams, diffusion beams, sword, cannon, two-direction fire (forward and behind), and power-up attack, the latter of which powers up the current weapon. In addition, the astro-plane can turn into a hover mech. Power-up capsules are exposed by shooting cargo transports that move along the ground. The action borders on redundant, but certain enemies are especially vulnerable to specific weapons, infusing some strategy into the mix. The game has no ending, making high scores the ultimate goal.

Vigilante

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Combat, 1 player. 1989.

An extremely monotonous and limited (the titular hero can't jump-kick or move up or down) side-scroller, *Vigilante* has players walking from left to right, punching and kicking bad guys. The Rogues in question (known as Skinheads in Irem's 1988 arcade original) run up to Vigilante, one after another, grabbing him by the throat if players aren't quick enough to execute a punch or a kick. Getting grabbed drains Vigilante's health (a frustrating feature), but he can shake off the bad guys with a quick side-to-side wiggle. Vigilante, who can pick up nunchucks for a longer reach, must battle his way through five short levels (City Streets, Junkyard, Bridge, Downtown, and Construction Sites), with the ultimate goal of rescuing his girlfriend, Maria (known as Madonna in the arcade game). Nicely detailed background visuals can't save this mediocre port of a lame arcade game. Stick with *Double Dragon*.

Walter Payton Football

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Sports/Football, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

Named after the legendary Chicago Bears running back, *Walter Payton Football* is a playable, but flawed game. The overhead view is less than desirable, players cannot switch control between defenders, fumbling is nonexistent, there's tons of flickering, and the sounds are hideous. On a more positive note, a variety of plays are available, there are 28 teams from which to choose, and a password-backed Season mode will keep gamers busy for a good long while. Although superior to previous Master System titles *Great Football* and *Sports Pad Football*, *Walter Payton Football* will never be confused with *Tecmo Bowl* for the NES.

Wanted

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sanritsu Denki. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1989.

Designed for use with Sega's Light Phaser, *Wanted* puts players

in the role of Sheriff of the Western Territories. As the screen scrolls to the right, players must shoot thieves, gunslingers, and other bad guys while avoiding killing ladies, unarmed civilians, and other innocents. Some areas show the sheriff (viewed from behind) maneuvering along the bottom of the screen while others portray him riding a horse. Levels include: Tombstone, The Desert, Mary's Saloon, The Outland, Ricky's Hotel, Nugget Town, and The Final Showdown, the latter of which finds players firing at the Big Boss while avoiding TNT being thrown. There are challenge scenes as well, in which gamers shoot at bottles and coins. Each time the sheriff's gun fires, the screen blinks white, causing undue annoyance.

Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?

Publisher: Parker Brothers. Developer: Parker Brothers. Educational/Geography/First-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player. 1989.

Packaged with a Detective's Almanac, which is a key to success in the game, *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* for the SMS is based on the 1986 Broderbund computer semi-classic, which began on the Commodore 64 and spawned a PBS game show. Players travel



A poor man's *Double Dragon*, *Vigilante* is a standard beat-'em-up, the type of which was extremely popular during the 1980s.

around the world to collect the clues and warrants necessary to capture and arrest Carmen Sandiego and her henchmen, who have stolen 90 national treasures and stolen off to 30 different foreign cities. The top half of the screen shows the various buildings and cities, along with action-oriented character chases (unlike *Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* for the NES, this game has portions in which players duck bad guys' knives and bullets). The bottom half of the screen shows character portraits, point-and-click menus, and geographical and historical info. Also released for the SNES and Genesis.

Wonder Boy

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1987.

Before Sonic the Hedgehog, Wonder Boy (along with Alex Kidd) was the closest thing Sega had to a company mascot. In this first game in the series (which is a fantastic port of Sega's 1986 arcade game), players guide a young, blonde, prehistoric looking hero through forests, oceans, clouds, hills, icy caverns, and other areas, throwing hatchets at such enemies as bats, frogs, coyotes, snakes, spiders, octopi, and snails. Tom-Tom (as the titular boy is called) runs quickly, and he can jump over obstacles (including fire and rolling stones) and on top of moving platforms. He can also break open eggs to reveal helpful items, such as a guardian angel and a skateboard, the latter of which speeds up Tom-Tom and lets him take one extra hit. Grabbing food, such as milk and fruit, keeps Tom-Tom's energy meter/timer charged. A classic, brightly colored, left-to-right side-scroller (with no backtracking), *Wonder Boy* is extremely similar to *Adventure Island* (NES), which, thanks to an unusual licensing agreement, uses the same game engine, but alters various visual elements (including the characters).

Wonder Boy in Monster Land

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform/Adventure, 1 player. 1988.

An army of monsters has turned Wonder Land into Monster Land, prompting Tom-Tom to the rescue once again (this is the second

game in the *Wonder Boy* series). Armed with a short sword (a departure from the original game), the boy hero must battle his way through 12 labyrinthine levels, including The Coastal Town of Baraboro, The Mam Desert, and Pororo Islands. The game is infused with RPG elements (also a departure from the original game), including: magic spells (wind, lightning, and the like); alternate pathways (though the game is still level-based and largely linear); and hidden gold (which players can use to purchase shields, armor, boots, and other helpful items). The action is timed, meaning there's not always time to explore each level in its entirety. The graphics are colorful, but the theme is darker than in the first game, as the box implies: "No more cute dolls, fruit or milk. Now it's swords, armor, shields, labyrinths and fire breathing dragons." Based on the arcade game: *Wonder Boy: Monster Land* (Sega, 1987).

Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Platform, 1 player. 1989.

A huge, colorful, cartoon-like game, *Wonder Boy III* has a sword-swinging Tom-Tom trying to save Monster Land from Meka Dragon, a feat that involves getting turned into various creatures, each with different powers: Lizard-man (blows flames); Mouse-man (enters small areas); Piranha-man (swims); Lion-man (carries a large sword); and Hawk-man (flies). Each creature is rated according to attack points, defense points, and charm points. In his various guises, Tom-Tom (a.k.a. Wonder Boy) will travel through jungles, deserts, the sea, castles, and underground areas, jumping on platforms, using magic, entering doors, battling creatures (Cyclops, giant bats, skeletons, giant toads, faerie zombies, and the like), buying special items (including sabers, shields, armor, arrows, thunder, fireballs, boomerangs, keys, and medicine), and more. The ultimate goal in this fun, password-backed adventure is to recover the salamander cross, which can return Tom-Tom to his human form. Followed by: *Monster Lair* (TurboGrafx-16 CD) and *Wonder Boy in Monster World* (Genesis).

World Grand Prix

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Formula-1/Indy Racing, 1 player. 1986.

Although it suffers from monotonous graphics (the cars all look similar, as do the barren roadsides), *World Grand Prix* is a nice take on the *Pole Position* formula. Viewing the action from behind their vehicle, players race down 12 twisting, turning tracks, trying to pass enough cars to extend the action beyond the current lap. Placing high is a challenge (even for experienced drivers), but the two-speed (high and low) car handles well, making for a streamlined contest. Unlike *Pole Position*, *World Grand Prix* lets players upgrade their cars and design their own tracks. Upgrades include accelerator, engine, and handling.

Y's The Vanished Omens

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game, 1 player. 1988.

In *Y's The Vanished Omens*, players guide a swordsman named Aron through the caverns, towers, and towns of the Kingdom of Y's, searching for six magical books that hold the key to defeating Dark Dekt, an evil magician. As in many RPGs, gameplay consists of talking to characters, gathering clues and treasures, purchasing items (swords, keys, rings, shields, armor, potion, and the like), and exploring vast areas. However, the battle system in *Y's* is unusual. When an enemy appears, players should simply run Aron into the creature, as opposed to pressing an attack button. Meters show the current health of Aron and his foe, and killing monsters lets Aron level-up and become stronger. Includes battery backup. Adapted from the 1987 Japanese computer game, *Ys I: Ancient Ys Vanished*. Followed by: *Ys Book I & II* (TurboGrafx-16), *Ys III: Wanderers from Ys* (Genesis, SNES, TurboGrafx-16), and other sequels and offshoots.

Zaxxon 3-D

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Third-Person Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Zaxxon 3-D is an excellent sequel to Sega/Gremlin's *Zaxxon* (arcade, 1982), eschewing the isometric perspective of its progenitor in favor

of a behind-the-ship viewpoint and some extremely nifty 3D effects (thanks to the SegaScope 3-D Glasses). As gamers fly their Zaxxon vessel through outer space, shooting and avoiding Vargan Death Fighters, the ships, stars, enemy fire, and power-up capsules (for enhanced speed, extra lives, increased fuel tank capacity, and stronger firepower) seem to pop right out of the TV screen. Even more impressive looking are the Death Star Trench-like Battle Fortress sequences, in which players fly between (and over) walls and through magnetic barriers, shooting tanks, fuel tanks, and cannon batteries while avoiding missiles. Three types of mother ship bosses round out the fun, finely programmed action. Followed by: *Zaxxon's Motherbase 2000* (Sega 32X).

Zillion

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Platform Shooter/Adventure, 1 player. 1987.

Zillion is a fairly complex adventure game in which players, as Secret Agent J.J., must infiltrate the underground labyrinth of the Norsa Empire military base, save fellow agents Apple and Champ (who become playable characters after being found), and destroy the main computer. Armed with an upgradeable Zillion Laser, J.J. will shoot bad guys, crawl and duck under enemy fire, ride elevators, climb stairs, jump on platforms, wear infrared goggles (for seeing all sensors), and avoid force fields, mines, laser turrets, and other obstacles. More importantly, J.J. must open capsules in each room by shooting them, revealing codes in the process. After getting all the codes (writing the codes down is recommended), J.J. must enter them into a computer terminal in order to progress. Backtracking is sometimes required (the gun must be powered up to destroy certain capsules), pleasing those gamers who prefer nonlinear action. Loosely based on the 1987 Japanese anime series.

Zillion II: The Tri Formation

Publisher: Sega. Developer: Sega. Side-Scrolling Shooter/Platform Shooter, 1 player. 1988.

Dispensing with the strategic, nonlinear, and adventure elements of the original game,

Zillion II is playable, but surprisingly pedestrian, alternating between two types of action-oriented, side-scrolling gameplay. In the odd-numbered levels (there are eight levels in all), J.J. rides a motorcycle-like “Tri-Formation,” jumping over gaps and laser spikes while shooting jet soldiers, warriors, gun batteries, and other enemies. Grabbing power-ups can

increase health or gun strength or turn J.J. into an “Amorator” robot. Scrolling is forced. In the even-numbered levels, J.J. walks, jumps (on platforms and over gaps), shoots, and enters rooms, but there are no codes or computer terminals to bother with, no doubt disappointing zillions of fans. Also disappointing are the reduced roles of Apple and Champ.

GLOSSARY

Action: The vaguely descriptive word “action” is used to describe games in which players move objects or characters around the screen, but that don’t fall into any other category on this list. Activities include picking up items and transporting them to another part of the playfield, catching falling items, running around the screen collecting or dodging items, and much more.

Action Puzzle: A puzzle game that has players moving pieces around the screen and to their proper places within a set time, or at least in an action-oriented manner. The pieces are usually intended to be placed within a set pattern or configuration or matched up with similar pieces. Another type of action puzzle requires players to touch squares or other areas of the playfield to complete various strategy-oriented objectives.

Action Strategy: Similar to strategy, but players sometimes take more direct control of the action, such as piloting a ship, shooting enemies, or guiding a character around a battlefield.

Adventure: Adventure games require players to guide an explorer, adventurer, or other such action hero through a number of areas. The setting is usually exotic, such as a jungle, a swamp, or an alien planet, and oftentimes there are puzzles to solve, items to collect, treasures to find, enemies to battle, levels to reach, things to climb, worlds to explore, etc. Climbing and platform games oftentimes include adventure elements, but contain enough of a predominance of specific attributes to give them their own categories.

Adventure Puzzle: A game like *Lemmings*, in which players indirectly (or directly in the case of certain other games) guide a group of characters

as they travel through a series of puzzle-based levels. Adventure puzzles oftentimes have players flipping switches, pulling levers, or otherwise solving puzzles amidst scrolling (or at least multiple-screen), action-oriented gameplay.

A.I.: Short for artificial intelligence, which, in the case of video games, refers to the ability of onscreen objects or characters to respond to computer-controlled commands. Or, it can refer to how smart a game is in general.

Aircraft Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using planes, spaceships, or other airborne vehicles.

Aladdin Deck Enhancer: Published by Camerica and developed by Codemasters, this attachment plugs into the NES cartridge port and accepts compact cartridges. The Deck Enhancer (1992) contains circuitry common to all NES cartridges, meaning the smaller cartridges produced for the peripheral contain fewer parts, thereby reducing production costs. Packaged with *Dizzy the Adventurer*.

Alternating: Multi-player games in which players take turns. Certain games, such as checkers and chess, in which players’ alternating moves directly affect the other player’s game, are considered to be simultaneous.

Anime: Refers to Japanese cartoons or the art style used therein. Role-playing games frequently employ anime-style art, which is typified by short, cartoonish characters with large eyes.

Arcade: A public place in which numerous coin-operated video games are available for play. Snack bars, pinball machines, pool tables, and other

entertainments oftentimes supplement the arcade experience. Arcades did big business during the early 1980s, with simple, but highly entertaining games like *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids*, and *Pac-Man* gobbling millions of quarters. These days, however, most arcades consist primarily of elaborate racing simulations, dance machines, and ticket-redemption games.

Arcade Game: A coin-operated video game that is usually found in arcades, restaurants, bars, pool halls, and other public venues. Devotees of a specific arcade game will sometimes purchase the game in question for use in their home.

Art: Most art games focus on painting, drawing, and/or creating designs. Usually, the standard controller is used to move a pen, paint brush, or cursor, but some art games support a stylus that actually touches the screen.

Atari 5200: Released in 1982, the 5200 was Atari's graphically superior (if far less successful) follow-up to the Atari 2600. Games in the 5200 library relevant to this book include: *Gyruss*, *Joust*, *Ms. Pac-Man*, and *Qix*, among others. See *Classic Home Video Games: 1972–1984* for more info.

Atari Jaguar: Released in 1993, the Atari Jaguar was the first 64-bit game console and Atari's last system. Games in the Jaguar library relevant to this book include: *Defender 2000*, *Double Dragon V: The Shadow Falls*, and *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*.

Atari Lynx: Released in 1989, the Atari Lynx was the first handheld game system to boast a color LCD display. Games in the Lynx library relevant to this book include: *Double Dragon*, *Joust*, *Klax*, and *Paperboy*, among others.

Atari 7800: See the Atari 7800 chapter in this book.

Atari 2600: Released in 1977, the Atari 2600 (then called the Atari VCS) popularized home video games. It was followed by the Atari 5200 and the Atari 7800. Games in the 2600 library relevant to this book include: *Dark Chambers*, *Defender*, *Pac-Man*, and *Popeye*, among others. See *Classic Home Video Games: 1972–1984* for more info.

Backward-Compatible: Describes a video game system that can play a previously released system's games (in addition to its own, of course). For example, the Atari 7800 is backward-compatible with the 2600. Also refers to such joysticks and other peripherals.

Ball-and-Paddle: *Pong*- or *Breakout*-like games in which players maneuver a paddle or other implement to rebound a bouncing ball across the screen (usually toward a paddle controlled by the other

player), against a wall, or against rows of bricks or other items that disappear when hit.

Battery Backup: A game with battery backup contains a small battery within the cartridge, giving the game memory for saving progress, high scores, and/or other data.

Beat-'em-Up: Side-scrolling combat games with lots of punching and kicking are often referred to as "beat-'em-ups."

Bit: Short for binary digit, which is a digit in the binary number system. Binary digits, which are in the form of zeroes and ones, are used as the basic units of information storage and communication in many video game systems. Most consoles released prior to the Sega Genesis are 8-bit systems.

BMX Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using motocross bicycles. The tracks are usually hilly and made of dirt.

Board Game: A video game rendition of a traditional board game (such as checkers or backgammon), or an original game played on a virtual game board.

Boat/Watercraft Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using boats, jet skis, or other water-based vehicles.

Boss: An enemy at the end of a level or the end of a game that is usually fiercer, stronger, smarter, and/or larger than the standard enemies.

Business Simulator: A game that tries to emulate real-world business, such as investing in stocks, building a corporation, or managing a company. Strategy is usually involved.

Button-Masher: A game that requires little to no strategy, but success can be obtained by lots of shooting, punching, or other mindlessly fast button pushing. In the non-pejorative sense, a button-masher can simply refer to a game that requires quick, frequent pushes of one or more buttons.

Card Game: A game that uses virtual versions of traditional playing cards (aces, hearts, jacks, etc.), but with no gambling involved.

Cartridge: The plastic casing with ROM chip that is plugged into a video game console. Cartridges usually have labels on them bearing artwork and the game's title. It is recommended that the game system be turned off when a game cartridge is being inserted or pulled out of the console cartridge slot or port.

Casual Gamer: In general terms, a casual gamer plays video games only infrequently, or only desires to play the less challenging or less complicated titles.

CD-i: Short for Philips CD-i.

Character Racing: Non-sports racing in which players control a person, animal, or other character instead of a vehicle.

Cheap Hit: Refers to the effects caused by a poorly programmed projectile, enemy attack, or other obstacle that is virtually (if not entirely) unavoidable.

Cheat Codes: Specific, secretive combinations of button presses (oftentimes entered at the title screen) that result in unlocking special occurrences (i.e. cheats) in a video game, such as starting the game with extra lives, unlimited continues, special powers, or the ability to level-select. Cheat code documentation is not in the purview of this book, but gamers can consult www.gamefaqs.com for a wide variety of cheats for various consoles.

Checkpoint: a place in a video game, usually denoted by some type of graphical icon, where the game will save automatically (or at least continue from that point) if the player's character or other onscreen object reaches that area. After the player dies, play begins from that checkpoint (unless a further checkpoint has been passed).

Climbing: A game in which the primary activity is climbing ladders, ropes, vines, or other such objects. The goal in many climbing games (such as *Donkey Kong*) is to reach the top of the playfield, but it can also involve collecting items, jumping over obstacles, hitting (or otherwise defeating) enemies, and much more.

Clone: A game that copies a previously released game in a number of obvious ways.

Coin-op: Short for coin-operated video game. Also known as arcade game.

ColecoVision: Released in 1982, the ColecoVision was considered to be the first home game system to boast arcade-quality graphics. Games in the ColecoVision library relevant to this book include: *Boulder Dash*, *BurgerTime*, *One-on-One*, and *Zaxxon*, among others. See *Classic Home Video Games: 1972–1984* for more info.

Collision Detection: How accurate the onscreen objects are in coming in contact with or otherwise relating to each other in terms of the visual images they project to the player. A game with poor collision detection can result in unwarranted deaths, such as a missile that appears to miss the player, but kills him or her anyway.

Console: The base, or main part, of a video game system, irrespective of the wiring or controllers. Also used to refer to a game system in general. Does *not* refer to computers or handheld systems.

Continue: Many games offer one or more “continues” after the player has run out of lives. This lets the player continue from the last level (or other area) where the previous game left off.

Control Pad: A flat controller that contains a directional pad and [usually two or more] action buttons.

Controller: A joystick, trackball, control pad, or other instrument used to maneuver onscreen objects.

Credits: The people or companies who designed, published, or were otherwise involved in the making of a game. In many games, the credits roll after a game has been beaten, similar to credits rolling after the end of a movie.

Cursor: A pointer, plus symbol, or other such object that moves freely around the screen via the controller. Cursors are frequently used as aiming devices for first-person or light gun shooting games, where they oftentimes appear as a crosshair or a gun sight.

Cut Scene: Between levels of certain games (such as the *Ninja Gaiden* series for the NES), movie-like sequences (animated or static) called cut scenes will sometimes play, telling the game's storyline and providing added visual flair.

D-pad: Short for directional pad.

Dancing Simulator: A game that lets players choreograph or program various dance routines.

Dedicated Unit: A game system that only plays built-in games and does not accept such media as cartridges or discs.

Demolition/Combat Racing: Racing that involves crashing into, shooting, or otherwise damaging the other vehicle(s).

Developer: A company or person who played a key role in the actual designing of a game. If the company that developed the game is unknown, the publisher is usually given the credit, making the publisher a “ghost developer” of sorts.

Directional Pad: Replacing the joystick as the digital input mechanism of choice, directional pads (also called control pads) are utilized by most game systems from the mid-80s to the present. A d-pad is a flat, thumb-operated, plus-shaped (usually) object that allows players to move onscreen objects up, down, right, and left (and oftentimes diagonally by using combinations of two buttons). The NES popularized this type of controller.

Double Jump: Pressing the jump button a second time while the character is already in mid-air (from

the previous jump) in order to get that character to jump again is a double jump, sending the character even higher. Usually seen in platform games.

Drag Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using dragsters.

Dreamcast: Released in 1999, the Dreamcast was Sega's follow-up to the Saturn. Games in the Dreamcast library relevant to this book include: *Gauntlet Legends*, *Midway's Greatest Arcade Hits: Vol. 2*, *Namco Museum*, and *Phantasy Star Online*, among others.

DS: Short for Nintendo DS.

Dungeon Crawler: A term referring to the type of action-oriented role-playing game in which the hero navigates labyrinthine dungeons, caverns, and/or other such areas, collecting treasures and battling enemies along the way. Oftentimes, dungeon crawlers are light on plot and heavy on kills.

Educational: A game in which the intended outcome is for the player to learn about words, numbers, geography, music, or other subjects. Educational games usually emphasize learning over action, but frequently incorporate elements of action, climbing, shooting, or other genres.

8-bit: The Atari 7800, Nintendo NES, and Sega Master System are all 8-bit consoles. See also: Bit.

Electronic Games Magazine: The groundbreaking publication from the early 1980s that was the first (and best) magazine devoted exclusively to video games. It paved the way for mainstream video game journalism.

English: Putting indirect (or at least subtle) influence on the direction of an onscreen item (usually a bouncing ball).

Eye-Hand Coordination: The degree of ability one has to guide the movements of the hands in conjunction with the images one sees. During the 1980s, when video games came under attack for wasting players' time or for being too violent, apologists frequently touted the increased eye-hand coordination that would purportedly come as a result of playing the games.

Famicom: Released in 1983, the Famicom is the Japanese version of the Nintendo Entertainment System.

Fighting: A non-boxing, non-wrestling, non-scrolling fighting game in which players control a character that engages in fights (punches, kicks, etc.) with the other character. Fighting games usually offer a side-view perspective.

Fire Button: The action button on a controller.

Pressing this button (or buttons) causes onscreen objects to shoot, jump, or otherwise react.

First-Party Company: A company that develops or publishes a game for their own video game system.

First-Person Graphic Adventure: A game like *Déjà Vu* or *Shadowgate*, in which players perform such tasks as pointing and clicking on useable objects, selecting from a list of text-based commands, collecting items via an inventory system, solving puzzles and mysteries, and exploring various areas (most of which have static backgrounds) to uncover clues. The action is viewed through the eyes of the protagonist.

First-Person Role-Playing Game: Although the perspective can change at times (such as during battle sequences or while purchasing items from shops), this type of game largely features a first-person viewpoint, in which players view the action as the character would see it.

First-Person Shooter: On modern platforms, the term "first-person shooter" generally refers to such games as *Doom* and *Halo*, in which a character walks around toting weapons and shooting monsters, people, or other beings. However, classic console first-person shooters usually involve sitting in the cockpit of a ship, looking through a view screen, shooting other ships. Frequently, a cursor or gun sight is used in helping players aim their shots. Space combat simulators frequently incorporate this type of first-person shooting action, but are generally more complicated in terms of objectives and controls. First-person shooters can also refer to the type of target games that usually require a light gun, but that don't offer light gun support.

First-Person Tank Shooter: A slow, methodical shooter like *Battle Tank*, in which players view the action as though sitting inside a tank, looking out the main view screen.

Flickering: Graphical images that blink when they're not supposed to. This frequently occurs when the hardware (or the programming involved in the software) is not fully up to the task of moving numerous onscreen images at once, such as in various arcade ports for the NES.

Flight Combat Simulator: Similar to a space combat simulator, but players pilot a plane or chopper instead of a spaceship. Unlike flight simulators, flight combat simulators involve at least some shooting.

Flight Simulator: A game that tries to emulate actual plane, rocket, helicopter, or other airborne

flight as accurately as possible. Usually, the player must operate a variety of controls depicted on an instrument panel.

Forced Scrolling: When the screen scrolls of its own accord, independent of player movement. The player is usually required to proceed at a certain pace in order to keep up.

Formula-1/Indy Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using a Formula-1 or Indy racecar. Many racing games of this type try to be at least somewhat realistic.

Fortune Teller Simulator: A novelty game that purports to tell of the player's past or predict his or her future.

FPS: Short for first-person shooter or frames per second.

Frame Rate: The frequency in which video frames are displayed on a television set or other monitor. The more frames per second (fps), the better the fluidity of motion.

Futuristic Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using a sci-fi type of car or other such land-based vehicle.

Gambling: Blackjack, roulette, poker, slots, or any other Vegas-style game that involves the wagering of virtual money.

Game Boy: Released in 1989, the Game Boy was Nintendo's first handheld game system. Games in the Game Boy library relevant to this book include: *Dr. Mario*, *Castlevania Legends*, *Double Dragon*, and *Mega Man II*, among others.

Game Boy Advance: Released in 1999, the Game Boy Advance was the 32-bit follow-up to Nintendo's Game Boy Color. Games in the Game Boy Advance library relevant to this book include: *Boulder Dash EX*, *Castlevania*, *Columns Crown*, and *Ice Climber*, among others.

Game Boy Advance SP: Released in 2003, the Game Boy Advance SP was an upgrade of the Game Boy Advance, finally providing a lit (backlit or front lit, depending on the model) screen. The SP plays the same titles as the Game Boy Advance.

Game Boy Color: Released in 1998, the Game Boy Color was Nintendo's follow-up to the original Game Boy, adding color, crisper images, and longer battery life to the handheld formula. Games in the Game Boy Color library relevant to this book include: *Dragon Warrior III*, *Galaga*, *Ghosts 'n Goblins*, and *Rampage World Tour*, among others.

Game Gear: Released in 1991, the Game Gear was Sega's more sophisticated (yet less popular) answer

to Nintendo's handheld Game Boy. Games in the Game Gear library relevant to this book include: *Double Dragon*, *Fantasy Zone*, *Klax*, and *Ninja Gaiden*, among others.

Game Show: A game like *Wheel of Fortune* or *Family Feud*, in which players take part in a virtual rendition of a TV game show. Contestants usually compete for cash or prizes by answering trivia questions, solving word puzzles, or other such activities.

Game System: A video game machine, complete with console, wiring, and controllers. Usually refers to the type of system that hooks up to a television set and accepts plug-in cartridges, discs, or other ROM media.

Game.com: Released in 1997, the game.com was Tiger's black-and-white handheld system. Games in the game.com library relevant to this book include: *Monopoly*, *Sonic Jam*, *Wheel of Fortune*, *Wheel of Fortune 2*, and *Williams Arcade Classics*.

Gameplay: How well a game plays (or how a game plays in general) independent of accompanying graphical or sound considerations.

Gamer: A person who plays video games.

Gaming: Refers to the medium of (or the playing of) video games.

Genesis: Short for Sega Genesis.

Genre: The type of game, such as shooter, platformer, or role-playing. Many games incorporate a number of genres, but most have a dominate style of gameplay mechanic.

Graphics: Computer-generated images depicted on a television screen or other monitor.

Great Video Game Crash: Due to a number of factors, including competition from increasingly cheap personal computers and a glut of awful, cheaply produced games (many of them by third-party companies), the home video game industry took a nose dive in late 1983 and all but disappeared in 1984. With the release of the Nintendo NES in 1985, the hobby once again assumed a dominant place in popular culture.

Hack-'n'-Slash: An action-oriented game in which the protagonist uses a sword (or similar implement) to hack and slash his or her way through numerous enemies, usually in a fantasy or futuristic setting. Elements of hand-to-hand combat and platforming are frequently involved.

Hardcore Gamer: A hardcore gamer is the type of player who spends a large percentage of his or her life playing, purchasing, talking about, or other-

wise obsessing over video games. Hardcore gamers are usually competitive, meaning they keep track of their scores, catalogue the games they have beaten, and/or take pride in their prowess.

Hardware: The game console itself (as opposed to software or peripheral items).

Hyperspace: Transporting a spaceship instantly to another area of the screen or the game by simply pressing a button or entering the ship into a specific area. The ship in question usually disappears and reappears in the blink of an eye. Similar to warp, but less versatile in nature.

In the Wild: Refers to a video game for sale at a thrift store, garage sale, pawn shop, or other place that is not specifically a video game retailer.

Intellivision: Released in 1979, the Intellivision was Mattel's more sophisticated alternative to Atari's ubiquitous 2600 system. Games in the Intellivision library relevant to this book include: *BurgerTime*, *Commando*, *Donkey Kong*, and *Pop-eye*, among others. See *Classic Home Video Games: 1972–1984* for more info.

Isometric Action Role-Playing Game: A role-playing game in which the action scrolls diagonally and is viewed at an angled/overhead perspective (also known as a $\frac{3}{4}$ perspective). Combat is usually turn-based, with the game containing such typical RPG elements as character building, exploration, and item collecting.

Isometric Projection: The arcade version of *Zaxxon* (Sega, 1982) was the first video game to use isometric projection, which gave the graphics a faux 3D effect via an angled (or $\frac{3}{4}$) viewing perspective. The method has been employed with varying degrees of success for certain console games, including *Desert Falcon* for the Atari 7800.

Jaguar: Short for Atari Jaguar.

Jigsaw Puzzle: A game in which players maneuver puzzle pieces to fit them into place in order to make a picture. Unlike action puzzles, jigsaw puzzles require little eye-hand coordination, and competition is usually not much of a factor.

Joystick: Used for moving objects around the screen, a joystick is a handheld device attached to a game console, usually by a wire. Most joysticks are mounted on a base and contain at least one “fire” or “action” button for shooting, jumping, or other such maneuvers. Also, most joysticks are digital (at least for classic systems), but some, such as the Atari 5200 joystick, offer analog control. The Atari 7800 comes equipped with joysticks while the NES

and Master System come with control pads (though joysticks can be used).

Killer App: Short for killer application.

Killer Application: Refers to a console-specific, must-have game that is popular enough to help sell lots of hardware. *Super Mario Bros.* for the NES is a good example of a classic game that moved a lot of systems.

Konami Code: Introduced in the NES version of *Gradius*, the Konami Code gives players extra lives, power-ups, or other advantages in various Konami games. The code is entered by pressing up, up, down, down, left, right, left, B, A.

Launch Title: A video game that is newly released in stores the same day as its accompanying system.

Light Gun: The Nintendo Zapper for the NES and the Sega Light Phaser for the Master System are prominent examples of light guns, which have their roots in the arcades of the 1930s and certain *Pong* and *Pong*-like consoles of the 1970s. For the Atari 7800, players can use an Atari XE light gun or a Best Lightgun (produced by Best Electronics) for such shooters as *Alien Brigade* and *Barnyard Blaster*.

Light Gun Shooter: Any shooting game that allows the use of a pistol, rifle, or other gun-based controller. Players point the gun at the screen and fire at aliens, ducks, bad guys, or other targets.

Lynx: Short for Atari Lynx.

Maze: Most maze games involve guiding a character (such as Pac-Man) through a maze or mazes, eating dots (or other small items) while avoiding enemies. Many maze games include special edible items that let the character turn the tables on its enemies. Certain maze games, such as *Dig Dug* and *Boulder Dash*, let the character dig (or otherwise create) its own maze-like pathways.

Maze Shooter: Instead of eating dots or digging tunnels as in standard maze games, maze shooters have the protagonist firing a gun or other weapon at enemies and/or the other player's character.

Mega Drive: Released in 1988, the Mega Drive is the Japanese version of the Sega Genesis.

Mini-Game: A small bonus game or contest contained somewhere (oftentimes at the end of the level) within the main game; they are usually good for earning extra lives, points, powers, or other goodies. Alternatively, mini-games are sometimes selectable via a menu screen and played independently of the standard game.

Miniature/Radio Control Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using the types of toy cars, trucks, or other vehicles that run via remote control.

Mission-Based Racing: A game in which the player drives a car or other vehicle around city streets or other pathways, trying to perform specific objectives beyond simply reaching the finishing line, racing against the timer, or competing against other drivers. Such missions can include finding hidden treasure or completing levels.

Monitor: A screen, such as a television set, that displays video images.

Monster Truck Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using monster trucks. Elements of demolition/combat racing are sometimes involved.

Motorcycle Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using motorcycles.

Multi-Game Compilation: A cartridge that contains four or more games of different genres.

Multi-Genre Game: A game that contains four or more complete and separate types of genres.

Multi-Platform Game: A game, such as *Pac-Man*, that is available for numerous (or at least more than one) game system.

Multi-Tap Adapter: A peripheral that hooks to a game system and lets players attach additional controllers, allowing for more than just two players to play simultaneously on a particular game.

Musical Instrument/Band Simulator: Whether designed for a physical instrument (such as the keyboard in *Miracle Piano Teaching System* for the NES) or a standard controller, this type of game attempts to replicate the experience of performing music. Usually, players must follow the melody of the song (or create songs of their own) by pressing buttons on the controller. *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* are modern versions of this type of game.

Mystery Adventure: A game in which players, as a private investigator or a police officer, explore crime scenes and gather clues in order to solve murder mysteries or other crimes.

Naval Combat Simulator: A game, such as *Silent Service* for the NES, that puts the player at the helm of a nautical vehicle (or fleet of vehicles), using realistic and oftentimes complicated control techniques to command the ship(s) in question.

Neo Geo: Released in 1990, the Neo Geo was SNK's pricey game system that was fully compatible with the Neo Geo Multi Video System (MVS for short), which was a cartridge-based arcade cabinet. Games

in the Neo Geo library relevant to this book include: *Baseball Stars 2*.

Neo Geo Pocket Color: Released in 1999, the Neo Geo Pocket Color was SNK's handheld system. Games in the Pocket Color library relevant to this book include: *Baseball Stars Color*, *Pac-Man*, and *Sonic the Hedgehog Pocket Adventure*.

NES: Short for Nintendo Entertainment System.

Next-Generation System: A game console that is not only new (or soon to be released), but that is also cutting edge in design and execution. Generally speaking, it should be more powerful and have better graphics and sounds than previous systems.

Nintendo DS: Released in 2004, the DS is Nintendo's dual-screen handheld game system. Games in the DS library relevant to this book include: *Bomberman*, *Contra 4*, *Gauntlet*, and *New Super Mario Bros.*, among others.

Nintendo Entertainment System: See the Nintendo NES chapter in this book.

Nintendo 64: Released in 1996, the Nintendo 64 was Nintendo's follow-up to the Super Nintendo. Games in the N64 library relevant to this book include: *Asteroids Hyper 64*, *Castlevania*, *Dr. Mario 64*, and *Tetrisphere*, among others.

Non-Scrolling Platform: A fixed-screen game in which the lead character runs, jumps, and otherwise works his or her way around a series of beams, blocks, floors of a building, or any other type of platform. There are often obstacles to jump over, elevators to ride, enemies to avoid, and things to climb (but not as much climbing as in actual climbing games).

Non-Scrolling Shooter: Any fixed-screen shooter that does not fall into the slide-and-shoot, light gun, first-person, or other shooter categories.

N64: Short for Nintendo 64.

Nudge: A video pinball term used to describe "pushing" on the table or putting English on the ball.

Number Puzzle: Most number puzzle games have players decoding, arranging, or otherwise strategically manipulating numbers, but without enough actual math involved to qualify as an educational title.

One-Hit Death: When all it takes is one punch, bullet, or other such attack to kill a character. While most modern games (and many games listed in this book) incorporate health bars, shields, and other such avenues for allowing the player's character to get hit numerous times, older games often employ one-hit deaths.

I-Up: An icon or symbol that can be maneuvered over or otherwise grabbed to grant the player an extra life.

Overhead View Action: An action-oriented game that is viewed from a top-down perspective, as long as it doesn't fall into another category, such as RPG or shooter.

Overhead View Free-Roaming Shooter: A scrolling shooter in which the player's ship (or other vehicle) can point, shoot, and move in all directions, and the screen scrolls along with it. A game like *Asteroids* has somewhat similar ship movement, but the screen doesn't scroll, so it belongs in the non-scrolling shooter category. Also refers to games like *Heavy Barrel*, in which players walk around in all directions on a scrolling playfield, shooting enemies.

Pack-In Game: A video game that is included as an accessory with a game system, a keyboard, or other such item.

Parallax Scrolling: Pioneered by the arcade version of *Moon Patrol* (Williams, 1982), this type of scrolling occurs when layered, translucent images scroll on top of each other at various speeds and directions to give the graphics the illusion of depth.

Password: In games with a password feature, progressing past certain levels or points in the game rewards players with passwords, which should be written down and can be entered at a later time. Entering the appropriate password will automatically advance the player to a particular level or saved point in the game. Passwords can be in the form of numbers, letters, or icons.

Pause: Freezing a game in progress so that players may take a break from the action and return later exactly where they left off. The Atari 7800 and Sega Master System each have a pause button on the console while pressing start on the control pad pauses most NES games.

Peripheral: A joystick, voice module, or most any other item that is compatible with a game system, but is not actual hardware or software.

Philips CD-i: Released in 1991, the CD-i was a pricey, multi-media console that could play games, audio CDs, karaoke CDs, and video CDs (VCDs). Games in the Philips CD-i library relevant to this book include: *Battleship*, *Dragon's Lair*, *Zelda's Adventure*, and *Zelda: The Wand of Gamelon*, among other titles.

Pinball: In pinball video games, players operate at least one pair of flippers, hitting a bouncing ball around a table filled with spinners, bumpers,

and/or other targets. Most video pinball games are designed to emulate real pinball machines, but some add adventure, shooter, or other elements.

Pixel: Short for picture element, referring to illuminated points (small graphic units) on the screen. Pixels combine to form images. The more pixels per inch, the sharper the display.

Pixelated: When the individual pixels of an on-screen image are blatantly noticeable, those graphics are sometimes referred to as being pixelated. Pixelated graphics are essentially a given with many classic games.

Platform: The specific brand, model, or type of video game system. Or, a flat surface, oftentimes suspended, that a video game character can walk across or jump on.

Platform Shooter: A game in which the lead character runs, jumps, and otherwise works his or her way around and/or across a series of beams, blocks, floors of a building, or any other type of platform, shooting enemies along the way. There are often obstacles to jump over, elevators to ride, and things to climb, but these elements are usually secondary to shooting.

Playable: Games described as being playable lack the type of egregious flaw (such as horrible controls or a bug in the program) that would make a game utterly beyond recommendation, regardless of any other aspect of the game.

Player: The human being who is actually playing the game. Or, a specific type of video game character, such as an athlete (a basketball player, for example).

Playfield: The area on the screen where the gaming action takes place. Usually refers to the largest portion of the screen, but only when the game is not in title mode, selection mode, or other non-action mode.

PlayStation: Released in 1995, the PlayStation was Sony's first game console. Games in the PlayStation library relevant to this book include: *Arcade Party Pak*, *Contra: Legacy of War*, *Mega Man 8*, and *Namco Museum Vol. 1*, among others.

PlayStation Portable: Released in 2005, the PSP was Sony's first handheld game system. Games in the PSP library relevant to this book include: *Bomberman*, *Capcom Classics Collection: Reloaded*, *Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles*, and *Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins*, among others.

PlayStation 2: Released in 2000, the PS2 was Sony's follow-up to the PlayStation. Games in the PlayStation 2 library relevant to this book include: *Capcom*

Classics Collection, *Neo Contra*, *Shinobi*, and *Midway Arcade Treasures*, among others.

PlayStation 3: Released in 2006, the PS3 was Sony's follow-up to the PlayStation 2. Games in the PlayStation 3 library relevant to this book include: *Bionic Commando*, *Gauntlet II* (downloadable via the PlayStation Store), *Golden Axe: Beast Rider*, and *Prince of Persia*, among others.

Pong: Released in 1972, *Pong* was the first commercially successful arcade game, leading to numerous clones and copycats, including the ubiquitous ball-and-paddle games available for the home (as dedicated units or game cartridges). *Pong* was created by Nolan Bushnell, the legendary founder of Atari.

Port: A game that has been translated from one system or format to another. The term is commonly used to describe a home console version of an arcade game.

Power-Up: Icons, symbols, or other objects that can be maneuvered over or otherwise grabbed to enhance the character or vehicle the player is controlling. Power-ups can sometimes be obtained by defeating certain enemies. Examples of power-ups include the power pills in *Pac-Man* and the fire flowers in *Super Mario Bros.*

Prototype: A professionally designed game that exists in some form (such as a label-less cartridge), but was never officially released to the public. Prototype games, which are oftentimes incomplete, usually command a premium on the collector's market due to scarcity.

PS1: Short for PlayStation (the "1" designation came into being with the release of the PlayStation 2).

PSP: Short for PlayStation Portable.

PS3: Short for PlayStation 3.

PS2: Short for PlayStation 2.

PSX: Short for PlayStation.

Publisher: A person or company who plays a key role in paying for, manufacturing, distributing, marketing, or otherwise making sure a game gets produced and sold.

Rally/Off-Road Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s) out doors around tracks of varying terrain, such as dirt or mud. Sometimes tracks aren't even involved. BMX and monster truck racing usually contain elements of rally/off-road, but are specific enough to warrant their own categories.

Rapid Fire: When the character, ship, or other shooting implement can shoot at a fast, constant

rate (as opposed to slower, more methodical shooting). Depending on the game, this is done by pressing the fire button rapidly or by simply holding it down.

Raster Graphics: The type of onscreen images that are made up of pixels or collections of pixels. Also referred to as bitmapped images.

Real-Time Strategy: This type of game has players performing such relatively complicated tasks as gathering and managing resources, deploying troops, developing technology, constructing buildings, and more. Unlike turn-based strategy titles, in which players take turns making their moves, RTS games have players going about their business at the same time.

Role-Playing Game: An RPG is a game in which players assume the role of a character (or band of characters) who undertakes a lengthy quest that is more complicated in nature than that found in the typical action or adventure game. The character(s) in question can usually gain powers (such as magic) and/or weapons (such as special swords) as he or she completes missions or engages in battles contained within the overall quest. Battles can be action-oriented or determined in less direct fashion, such as comparisons of the characters' attributes.

ROM: Short for read only memory, which is memory data that can be read by the computer. Most video game cartridges contain ROM.

Rotary Controller: An analog controller that rotates clockwise and counterclockwise to move onscreen objects in two directions (usually right and left or up and down). The Atari 2600 paddles are the most famous version of this type of controller.

Saturn: Short for Sega Saturn.

Scrolling: In games that employ scrolling, players maneuver a character, ship, or other object around large, contiguous playfields. Some games scroll in all directions while others limit the action to right and left, up and down, or in just one direction (usually up or to the right).

Sega CD: Released in 1992, the Sega CD was a disc-based add-on to the Genesis. Games in the Sega CD library relevant to this book include: *After Burner III*, *Jeopardy!*, *Sega Classics 4-in-1*, and *Sonic CD*, among others.

Sega Genesis: Released in 1989, the Sega Genesis was the 16-bit follow-up to the Sega Master System. Games in the Genesis library relevant to this book include: *Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle*, *Battletoads*, *Columns*, and *Sonic the Hedgehog*, among others.

Sega Master System: See the Sega Master System chapter in this book.

Sega Saturn: Released in 1995, the Saturn was Sega's follow-up to the Sega 32X. Games in the Saturn library relevant to this book include: *Contra: Legacy of War*, *Saturn Bomberman*, *Sega Ages*, and *Shinobi Legions*, among others.

Sega 32X: Released in 1994, the 32X was a disappointing add-on to the Sega Genesis. Games in the 32X library relevant to this book include: *After Burner*, *Space Harrier*, *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*, and *Zaxxon's Motherbase 2000*.

Sega 32X CD: The Sega 32X CD is an add-on to the Genesis/Sega CD/Sega 32X setup, meaning it requires all three of those systems to run. Only five titles were produced for the peripheral: *Corpse Killer*, *Fahrenheit*, *Night Trap*, *Slam City with Scottie Pippen*, and *Supreme Warrior*.

7800: Short for Atari 7800.

Shields: Many classic games feature one-hit deaths, but some let players use shields, which temporarily make the ship or character invulnerable or able to withstand at least one hit.

Shooter: Any type of game in which shooting plays the dominant role.

Side-Scrolling Combat: A fighting game in which the protagonist moves from left to right (usually), punching, kicking, hacking, slashing, or otherwise battling enemy after enemy after enemy. Sometimes there are weapons to pick up, obstacles to avoid, platforms to jump on, and/or fighting moves to gain.

Side-Scrolling Platform: An action-heavy game in which the protagonist moves from left to right (usually), jumping across gaps and on top of various platforms. Climbing, swimming, swinging, and other maneuvers are sometimes required, and there are almost always enemies and/or obstacles to avoid or defeat.

Side-Scrolling Shooter: A shooting game like *Gradius* or *R-Type* in which the action scrolls to the right and/or left. Horizontal shooting is usually involved, and sometimes the player's ship can drop bombs on enemies and/or targets.

Simultaneous: Multi-player titles in which at least two of the gamers play at the same time.

Slide-and-Shoot: A non-scrolling game like *Galaga* in which the player maneuvers a ship or other shooting implement left and right in a straight line along the bottom of the screen, firing upward at aliens, ships, or other enemies and/or obstacles.

Slowdown: Graphical images that slow down when they're not supposed to. This sometimes occurs when the hardware (or the programming involved in the software) is not fully up to the task of moving numerous onscreen images at once.

Smart Bomb: Smart bombs destroy (or at least damage) most or all onscreen enemies. This type of weapon was popularized by the arcade classic, *Defender* (1981).

SMS: Short for Sega Master System.

SNES: Short for Super Nintendo.

Software: Cartridges or other forms of media that are plugged (or otherwise inserted) into game systems (hardware) in order to play the games. Also refers to computer applications.

Space Combat Simulator: A first-person shooter set in outer space, but with more elaborate and oftentimes more realistic features and objectives.

Split Screen: When the playfield is divided into two separate, distinct, but oftentimes interrelated areas. Usually, one player pays attention to one half of the screen while the other player concentrates on the other half.

Sports: This self-explanatory genre covers a variety of sports simulations, but when the sport represented is altered considerably (such as when a tennis title is actually a ball-and-paddle game), that is taken into consideration when designating that game with a genre.

Sports Car Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), using standard sports cars instead of racecars or other vehicles.

Stealth: In most stealth games, players must infiltrate or escape enemy quarters without getting caught. Although shooting and weapons usage in general play a key role, the emphasis is on the avoidance of enemies and moving past them undetected. Battles that do occur usually demand good timing, accuracy, and keen observation of the surroundings.

Stock Car Racing: Racing against the clock or another player(s), usually around oval tracks, using the types of cars driven by NASCAR racers.

Strategy: A game in which skillful planning, tactical maneuvering, and/or calculated management takes precedence over direct control of the action.

Strategy Role-Playing Game: Like most RPGs, strategy role-playing games generally feature some or all of such elements as experience points, hit points, conversations with characters, and item acquisition. However, an emphasis is placed on stra-

tegic and tactical aspects of the game, such as those found in a military simulation.

Super Famicom: Released in 1990, the Super Famicom is the Japanese version of the Super Nintendo.

Super Nintendo: Released in 1991, the Super Nintendo (or Super NES) was the 16-bit follow-up to the Nintendo NES. Games in the SNES library relevant to this book include: *Contra III: The Alien Wars*, *Gradius III*, and *Super Mario World*, among others.

Tactical Shooter: Although most games of this type incorporate first-person and/or third-person shooting action, tactical shooters are usually more realistic in nature than other shooting games. Many include such elements as espionage, spy tactics, sniper fire, terrorist activity, stealth, authentic weaponry, squad-based battles, military operations, and/or the rescuing of hostages. Mission-based objectives are commonplace in tactical shooters.

Third-Party Company: A company that develops or publishes a game for a system of another company. Capcom's releases for the NES are classic, textbook examples of third-party games.

Third-Person Action Role-Playing Game: Most third-person action role-playing games are at least somewhat similar to *The Legend of Zelda*, in which players view their character (usually a solo figure) from overhead as he or she engages in real-time battles. Real-time swordplay and/or other actions are generally at least on par (in terms of importance to the game) with exploration, character-building, and other RPG elements.

Third-Person Graphic Adventure: Similar to first-person graphic adventure, but, instead of seeing the action through the eyes of the character, the character is visible onscreen.

Third-Person Role-Playing Game: An RPG in which players view their character or party of characters from a third-person perspective, usually from overhead or from the side. Unlike third-person *action* role-playing games, these types of games usually (but not always) feature turn-based battles.

Third-Person Shooter: A game like *Space Harrier* or *After Burner*, in which players view the character, ship, or other bullet-spewing implement of destruction from behind.

32X: Short for Sega 32X.

3DO: Released in 1993, the 3DO was Panasonic's pricey 32-bit console. Games in the 3DO library

relevant to this book include: *Battle Chess*, *Dragon's Lair*, *Family Feud*, and *Lemmings*.

Tile Puzzle: A game like *Shanghai*, in which players match tiles bearing similar patterns in order to remove them from the screen.

Trackball: A hard plastic ball that is mounted in a stationary base and is rotated to maneuver an object (such as a gun sight or a cursor) around the screen. The Sega Sports Pad for the Master System has a trackball, but the peripheral was a commercial failure and was used for very few games. The Atari Trak-Ball is compatible with the Atari 7800 (among other Atari systems).

Turbo: In certain racing games, players can use turbo (sometimes called "nitro") to give their vehicle an extra boost of speed. Turbo power frequently appears in the form of power-ups that can be driven over or purchased.

TurboGrafx-16: Released in 1990 by NEC, the TurboGrafx-16 was a nice console, but couldn't compete with the Genesis and SNES. Games in the TurboGrafx library relevant to this book include: *Bonk's Adventure*, *Dragon Spirit*, *Galaga '90*, and *Space Harrier*, among others.

TurboGrafx-16 CD: Released in 1990, the TurboGrafx-16 CD was a pricey, disc-based add-on for the TurboGrafx-16. Games in the TurboGrafx-16 CD library relevant to this book include: *The Adams Family*, *Prince of Persia*, *Ys Book I & II*, and *Ys III: Wanderers from Ys*.

Turn-Based Strategy: The type of strategy game where each player finishes all of his or her maneuverings and actions for a turn prior to the next player taking their turn. Many board games employ this technique, but they fall under the board game umbrella.

Unlicensed: A game that is released without approval from the hardware manufacturer (when such approval is required), usually referring to titles for the NES produced by such companies as Color Dreams and Tengen.

Vector Graphics: Onscreen images that are comprised of lines, points, arcs, angles, and other geometric shapes. A vector is a pair of end points on an x-y matrix. The Vectrex system, which displays vector graphics, is a rarity in the arena of classic home game systems as most employ raster graphics.

Vectrex: Released by GCE in 1982, the Vectrex was a tabletop game system with its own screen, which displayed games using vector graphics (as opposed to raster). Games in the Vectrex library relevant to this book include: *Pole Position*.

Vertical Scrolling Platform: Unlike the far more common side-scrolling platforming games, which move horizontally, the action in vertical scrolling platform games moves up and/or down the screen.

Vertical Scrolling Shooter: A game in which the player's ship, character, or other shooting implement travels upward (or possibly downward, but only on rare occasions), firing away at various airborne and/or ground-based enemies, targets, and other objects.

Vertical Scrolling Tank Shooter: A shooting game in which the player's tank travels up the screen, firing away at various ground-based objects.

Virtual Boy: Released in 1995, the Virtual Boy was Nintendo's failed attempt at an immersive, 3D game system. Games in the Virtual Boy library relevant to this book include: *3D Tetris*, *Mario Clash*, *Mario's Tennis*, and *Wario Land*.

Warp: Transporting a ship, character, or other object instantly to another area of the screen or another level or area of the game by simply pressing a button or entering a specific area. Similar to hyperspace, but more versatile in nature.

Wii: Released in 2006, the Wii was Nintendo's follow-up to the Game Cube. Using the Virtual Con-

sole portion of the Wii Shop Channel, players can download various games for the NES, Master System, and certain other classic consoles.

Word Puzzle: Word scrambles, word searches, and other types of puzzle games involving letters and words belong to this genre. Educational titles often involve letters and words, but are more geared toward younger players learning how to spell or read.

World-Building Simulator: A strategy game that lets players create a virtual world to their liking. Once the world has been formed, players can manage its armies, citizens, goods, and/or various other aspects.

Xbox: Released in 2001, the Xbox was computer giant Microsoft's first video game console. Games in the Xbox library relevant to this book include: *Capcom Classics Collection*, *Castlevania: Curse of Darkness*, *Gauntlet* (downloadable via Xbox Live), and *Tecmo Classic Arcade*, among others.

Xbox 360: Released in 2005, the Xbox 360 was Microsoft's follow-up to the Xbox. Using the Xbox Live Arcade online service, players can download *Galaga Legions*, *Mega Man 9*, *Contra*, *Defender*, *Ms. Pac-Man*, and other classic games.

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